shiwo komeyama

BLOODY CROSS

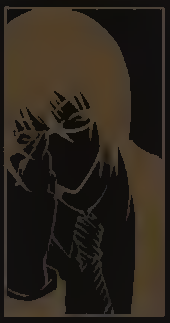
2

BLOODY CROSS

Shiwo Komeyama

2

BLOODY CROSS



02 contents

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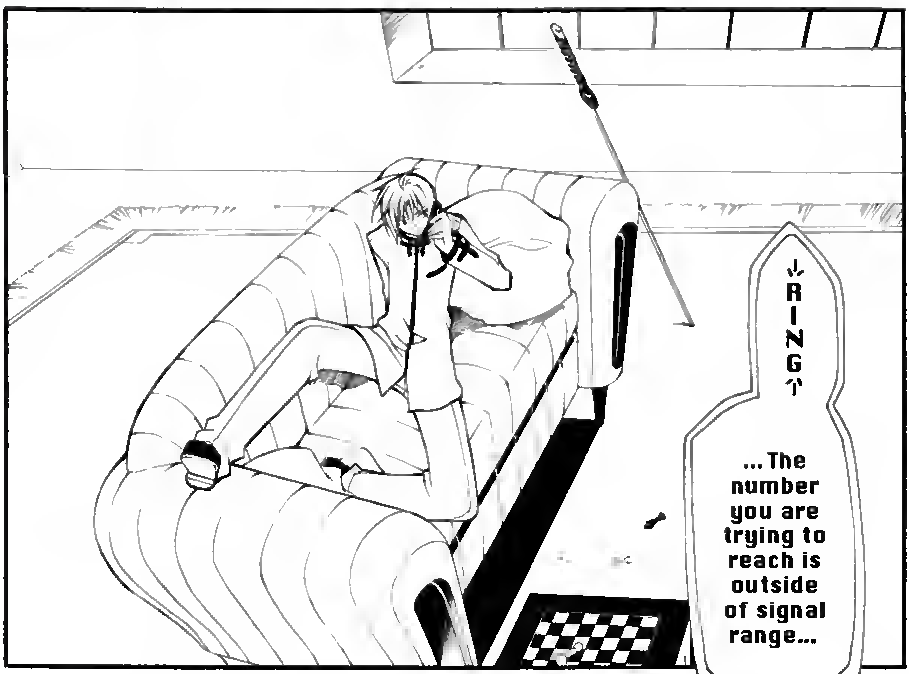
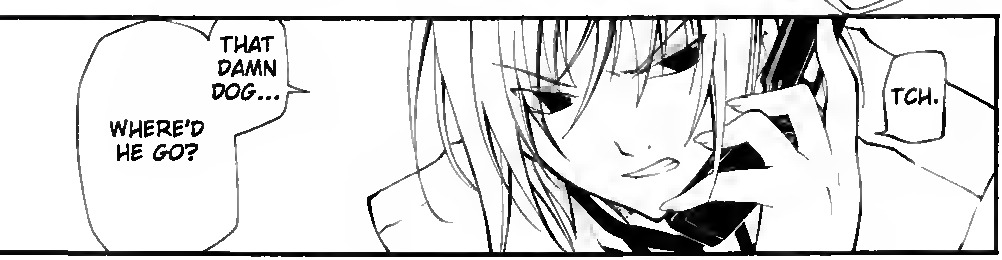
RING
RING


RING
...The number you are trying to reach is outside of signal range...


TCH.
THAT DAMN DOG...
WHERE'D HE GO?

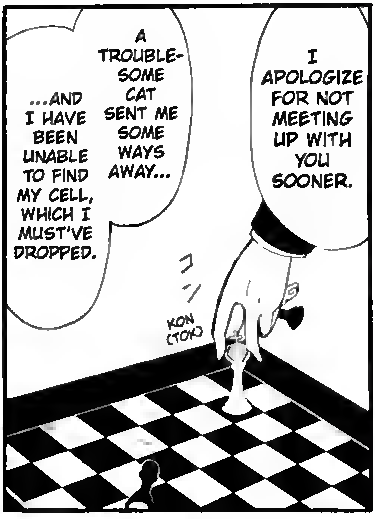
...RIGHT AFTER THAT SHOWER OF BLACK FEATHERS...
...THE DIVINE POWER'S PRESENCE SUDDENLY VANISHED.
BOSU (PHUMP)
...
I CAN ONLY ASSUME THAT BOTH OF GOD'S FIRST RELICS...
...WERE STOLEN BY THE OTHER SIDE.

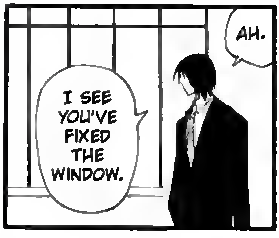
—...
SEEMS HE DID RECEIVE THE OTHER ORACLE AFTER ALL...
Chapter 4
Feathers
SA-TSUKI ...

—SO THE FIRST CONFRONTATION ENDED IN A LOSS...
KOTSU (TAK)
DOES IT VEX YOU, SIR?
TO HAVE LOST TO HIM, OF ALL PEOPLE?
...
WHAT THE HECK?

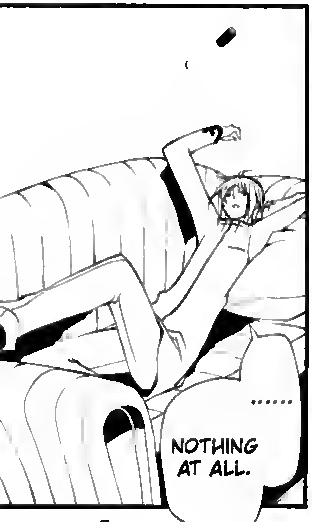
DOG.
AH...
...AND THAT'S THE FIRST THING OUT OF YOUR MOUTH?
YOU FINALLY CAME BACK ...

HERE. A GIFT.


I APOLOGIZE FOR NOT MEETING UP WITH YOU SOONER.
A TROUBLE-SOME CAT SENT ME SOME WAYS AWAY...
...AND I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO FIND MY CELL, WHICH I MUST'VE DROPPED.
KON (TOK)

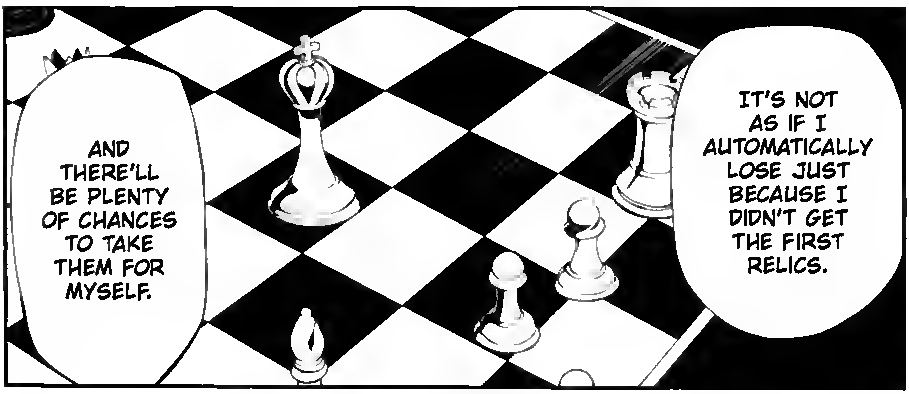

AH.
I SEE YOU'VE FIXED THE WINDOW.

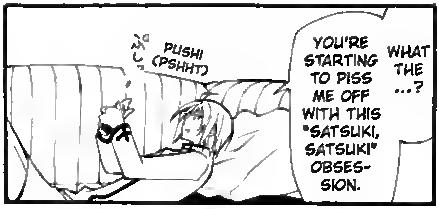
POSH (PLOP)


.....
NOTHING AT ALL.

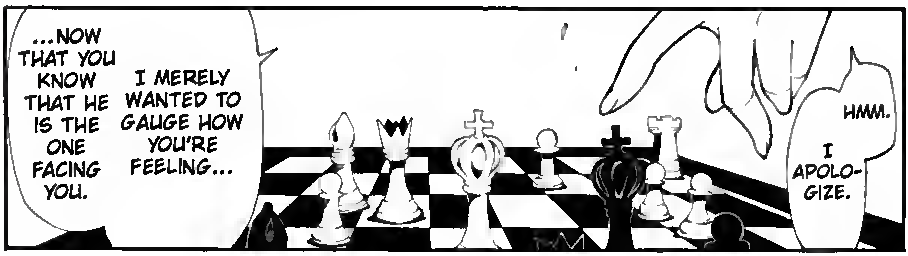
WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE FIRST CLASH...
...MAS-TER?
SO?

SIMPLY...
PASHI (SNATCH)
...THAT THE GAME TO DECIDE GOD HAS FINALLY BEGUN.


IT'S NOT AS IF I AUTOMATICALLY LOSE JUST BECAUSE I DIDN'T GET THE FIRST RELICS.
AND THERE'LL BE PLENTY OF CHANCES TO TAKE THEM FOR MYSELF.


PUSHI (PSHHT)
YOU'RE STARTING TO PISS ME OFF WITH THIS "SATSUKI, SATSUKI" OBSESSION.
WHAT THE ...?

YOU THINK YOU CAN DEFEAT SATSUKI?
KACHA (KLAK) KACHA

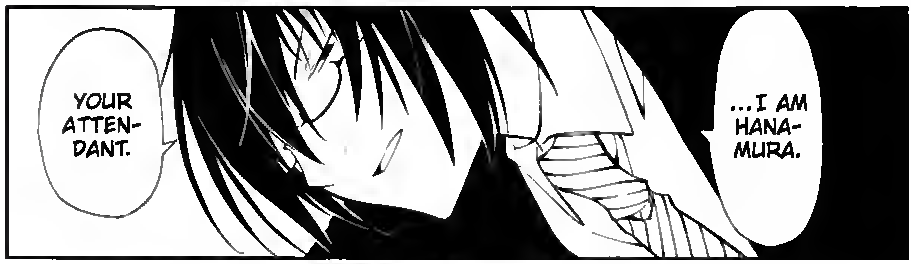

...NOW THAT YOU KNOW THAT HE IS THE ONE FACING YOU.
I MERELY WANTED TO GAUGE HOW YOU'RE FEELING...
HMM.
I APOLOGIZE.

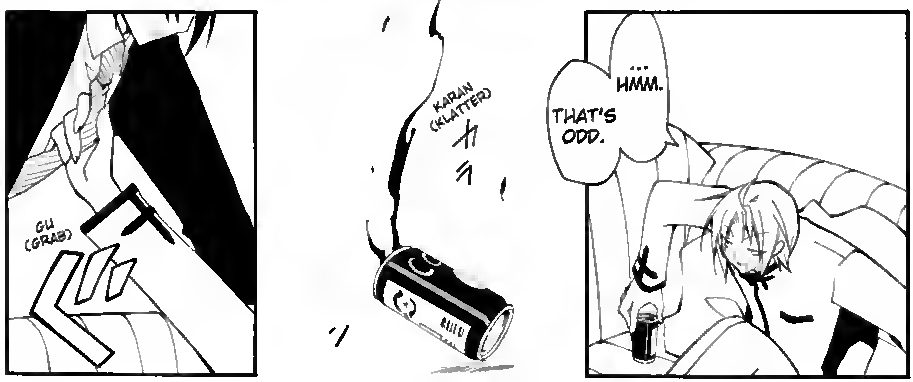
HISTORY ... HUH?

GISHI (CREAK)
...YOU HAVE A HISTORY.
SINCE ...

OH, BY THE WAY...

...WHO ARE YOU?


YOUR ATTEN-DANT.
...I AM HANA-MURA.


GU (GRAB)
KARAN (KLATTER)
...HMM.
THAT'S ODD.

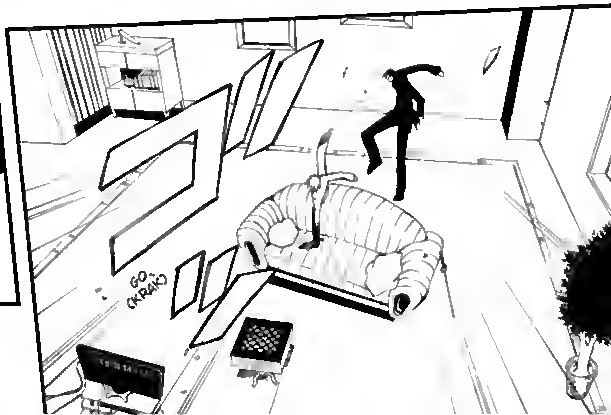
MY MAN-SER-VANT...
...STINKS MUCH MORE STRONGLY OF DOG, Y'KNOW?
IT'S RATHER NICE NOW THAT THE STENCH IS GONE, ISN'T IT?
SURU (SLIP)
すろ！
...
IN-DEED.
GORI (GRIND)
I MADE A LITTLE SNACK OF YOUR DOG NOT LONG AGO, YOU SEE!

DOSU (THD)
ドス
DON (BLAM)

YOU MISSED.

...!?

NGH!
ジャッ
JA (CHAK)

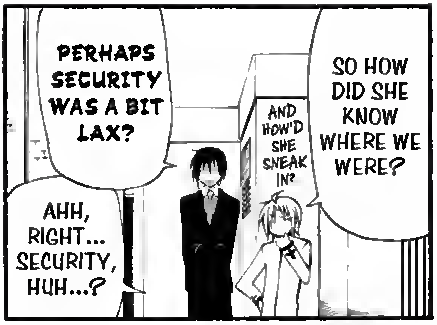

GO (KRAK)

DON
DON
DON
KYUI (VWEE)
...READING THE BULLETS' TRAJECTO-RIES...
...! HE'S...
DOSU
DOSU
DOSU
HUP.
...AND BENDING THEM!!

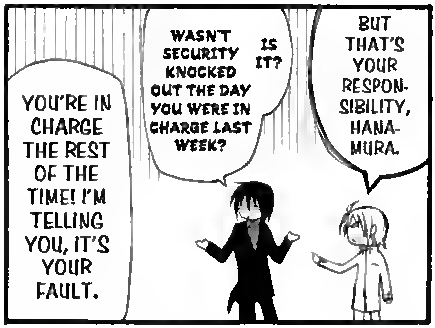
YOU DON'T NEED THESE IF YOU CAN'T HIT ME ANYWAY.
NOT THE GUN...
...AND NOT THAT FORM.
DO (VWOOM)

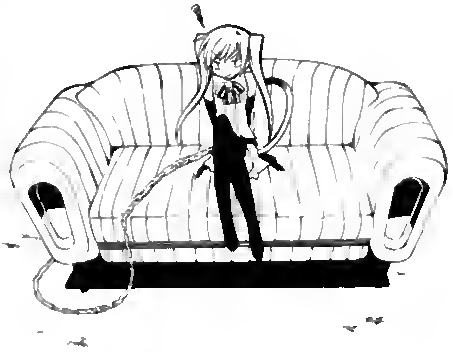
A CAT?
YOU'VE SAID SOME PRETTY BOLD THINGS FOR SUCH A LOWLY CREATURE.
CRAP ...
I'M OUTTA HERE!
PASHI (SNATCH)
HUH!?
WHAT THE ...!?
ZAA (ZHOO)
MY SHAD-OWS ...!?

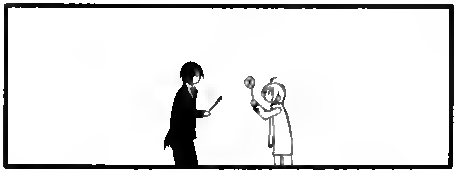
GAH!
...YOU KNOW ...
...MY ALLURING SCENT HAS MADE ME QUITE POPULAR WITH THE NEIGHBORHOOD LADIES...
...SO CALLING ME "STINKY" IS NOT ONLY RUDE, BUT ALSO UNTRUE.
.....
ARGH, IT'S SO GROSS!
DOG BREATH!
HE REEKS OF DOG.
AH.
THIS ONE'S THE REAL DEAL.

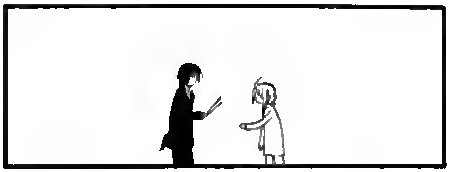

PERHAPS SECURITY WAS A BIT LAX?
AND HOW'D SHE SNEAK IN?
SO HOW DID SHE KNOW WHERE WE WERE?
AHH, RIGHT... SECURITY, HUH...?

GOT CAUGHT.


WASN'T SECURITY KNOCKED OUT THE DAY YOU WERE IN CHARGE LAST WEEK?
IS IT?
BUT THAT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY, HANAMURA.
YOU'RE IN CHARGE THE REST OF THE TIME! I'M TELLING YOU, IT'S YOUR FAULT.







...TCH.
BIKU (JUMP)

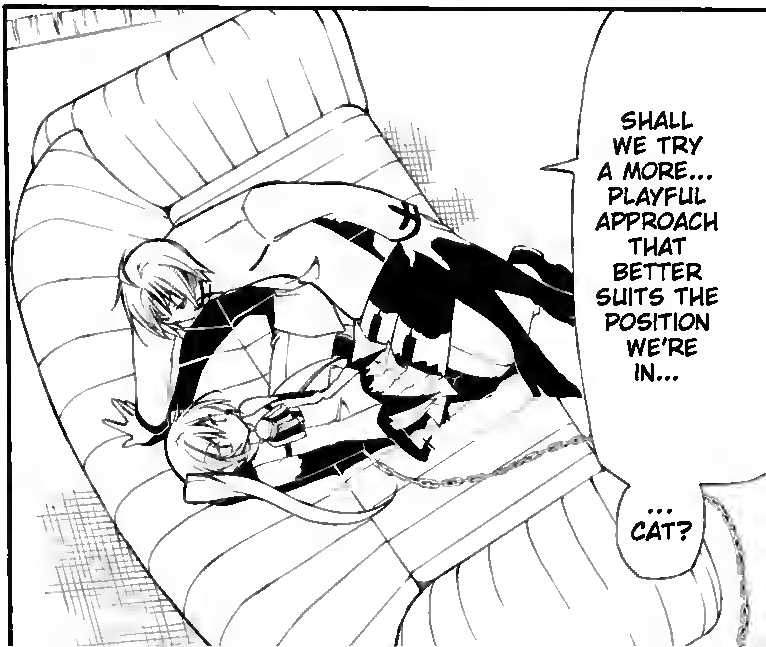
AGH!
DAN (SLAM)
AGH...I FRICKIN' PISSES ME OFF!
PACHI
PACHI
IT'S BEEN DECIDED YOU ARE AT FAULT.
PACHI (CLAP)

...NOW, THEN...
...LIKE IT OR NOT, IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO START TALKING.
TON (TMP)

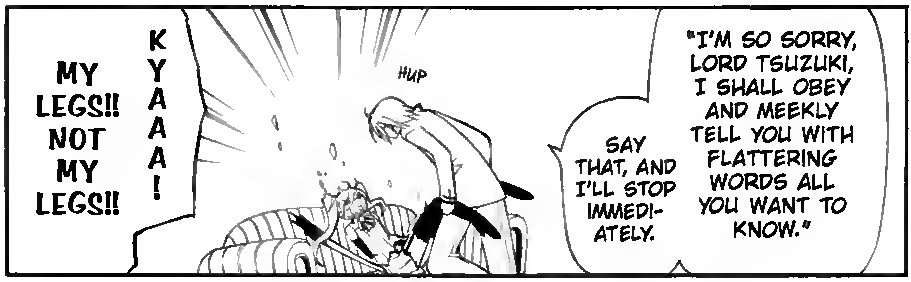
TELL ME THE LOCATION OF YOUR BASE.
YEAH, RIGHT!
NO WAY MOMOSE'S SAYIN' NOTHIN'!

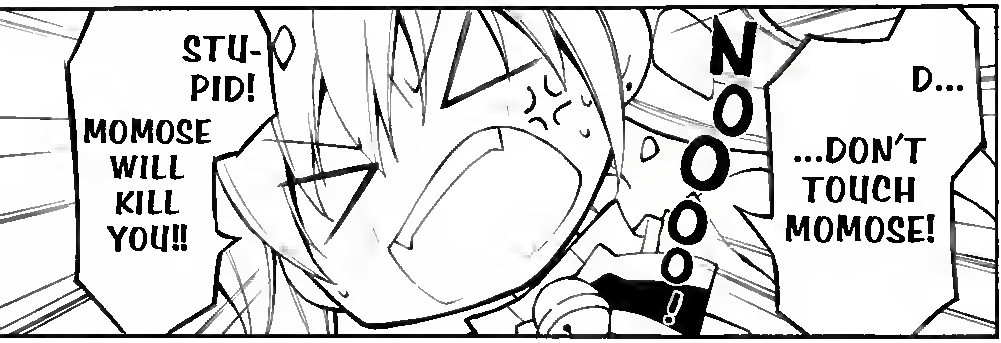
HMPH
...YOU'RE NOT VERY CUTE.
GISHI (CREAK)

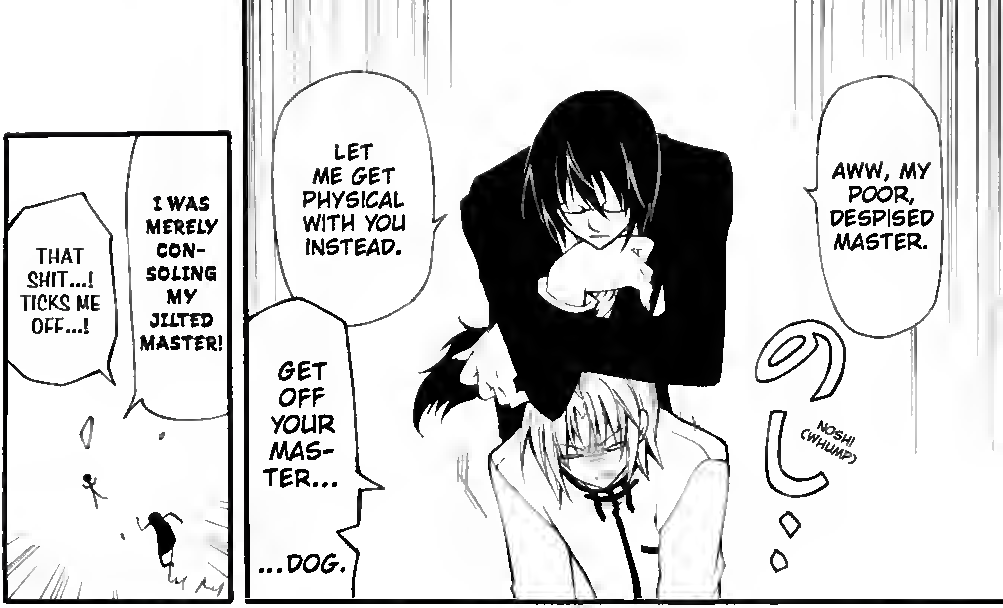
YOUR TREATMENT ULTIMATELY DEPENDS ON YOUR RESPONSES, YOU SEE.

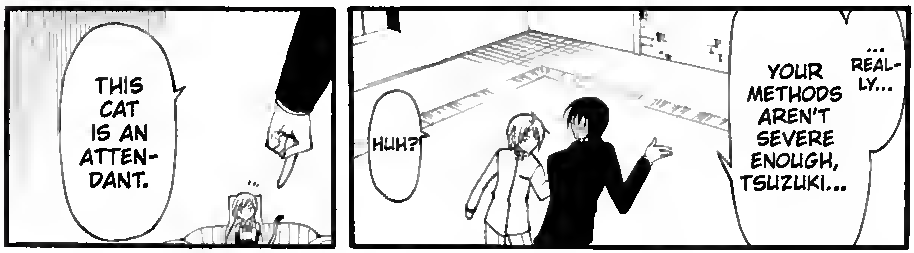

SHALL WE TRY A MORE... PLAYFUL APPROACH THAT BETTER SUITS THE POSITION WE'RE IN...
...CAT?

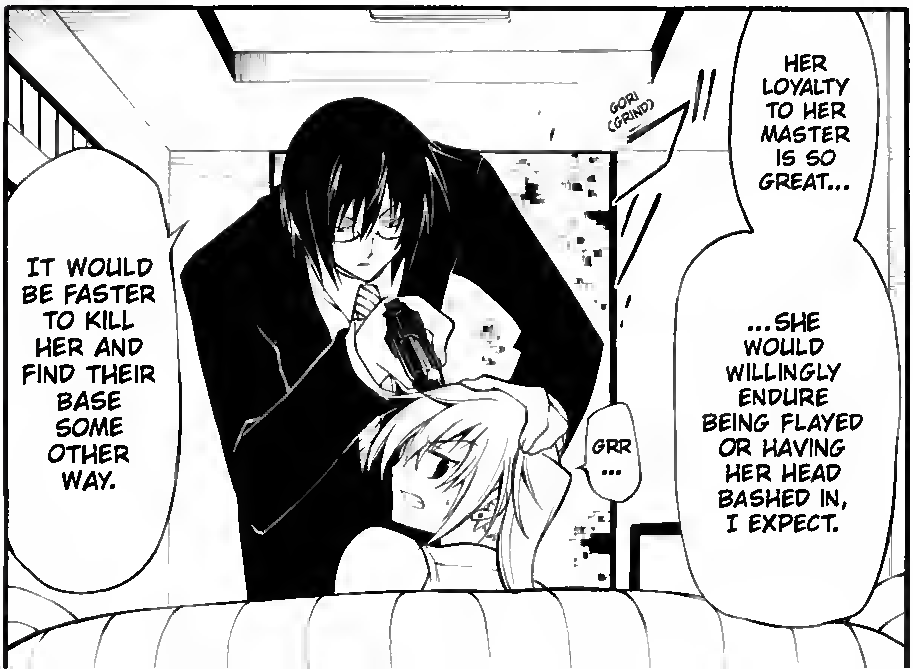
IF YOU'RE UNREA-SON-ABLE...
...I'LL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO TEASE AND TORMENT YOU IN ANY WAY I SEE FIT.
GROPE
WELL ...?
IF YOU DON'T WANT THAT, THEN HURRY UP AND TALK.


"I'M SO SORRY, LORD TSUZUKI, I SHALL OBEY AND MEEKLY TELL YOU WITH FLATTERING WORDS ALL YOU WANT TO KNOW."
SAY THAT, AND I'LL STOP IMMEDI-ATELY.
HUP
KYAAA!
MY LEGS!! NOT MY LEGS!!

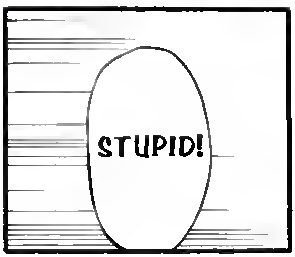

D...
...DON'T TOUCH MOMOSE!
NOOOO!
STU-PID!
MOMOSE WILL KILL YOU!!

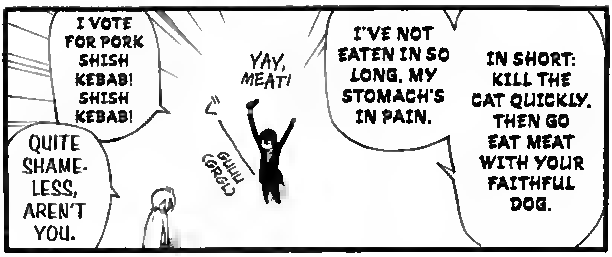

AWW, MY POOR, DESPISED MASTER.
NOSHI (WHUMP)
LET ME GET PHYSICAL WITH YOU INSTEAD.
GET OFF YOUR MASTER...
...DOG.
I WAS MERELY CONSOLING MY JILTED MASTER!
THAT SHIT...! TICKS ME OFF...!


YOUR METHODS AREN'T SEVERE ENOUGH, TSUZUKI...
...REALLY...
HUH?
THIS CAT IS AN ATTENDANT.

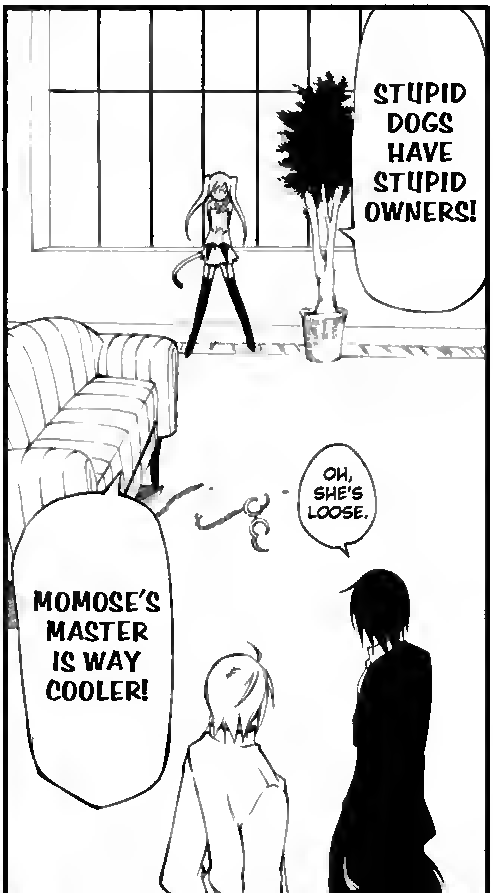

HER LOYALTY TO HER MASTER IS SO GREAT...
GORI (GRIND)
...SHE WOULD WILLINGLY ENDURE BEING FLAYED OR HAVING HER HEAD BASHED IN, I EXPECT.
GRR...
IT WOULD BE FASTER TO KILL HER AND FIND THEIR BASE SOME OTHER WAY.

...I SOUNDED LIKE A FAITHFUL DOG, DIDN'T I.
OH. JUST NOW...


STUPID!


I VOTE FOR PORK SHISH KEBAB! SHISH KEBAB!
YAY, MEAT!
GRRR
I'VE NOT EATEN IN SO LONG, MY STOMACH'S IN PAIN.
IN SHORT: KILL THE CAT QUICKLY. THEN GO EAT MEAT WITH YOUR FAITHFUL DOG.
QUITE SHAME-LESS, AREN'T YOU.

...SO WHY DON'T YOU JUST GIVE IT UP?
YOU'RE GONNA LOSE ANY-WAY...
BLEH!


STUPID DOGS HAVE STUPID OWNERS!
OH, SHE'S LOOSE.
MOMOSE'S MASTER IS WAY COOLER!

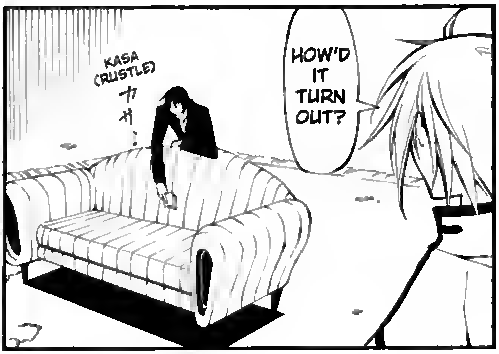
GASHAN (SMASH)
GAN (SHOCK)
I JUST HAD THOSE WINDOWS FIXED!!
AAA-RGH!!

THE WINDOWS AREN'T AN EXIT!!
DAMMIT! DAMN THEM BOTH!!
FIRST OFFENDER

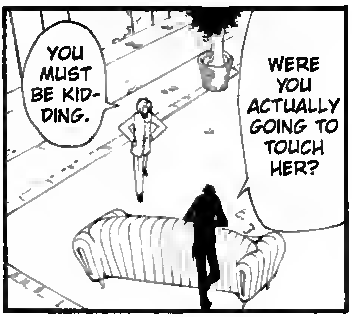
VERY GOOD.

I THINK I'LL INSTALL REINFORCED GLASS THIS TIME. YEAH, REINFORCED...
HAS SOCIAL CONVENTION CHANGED WITHOUT MY KNOWING?

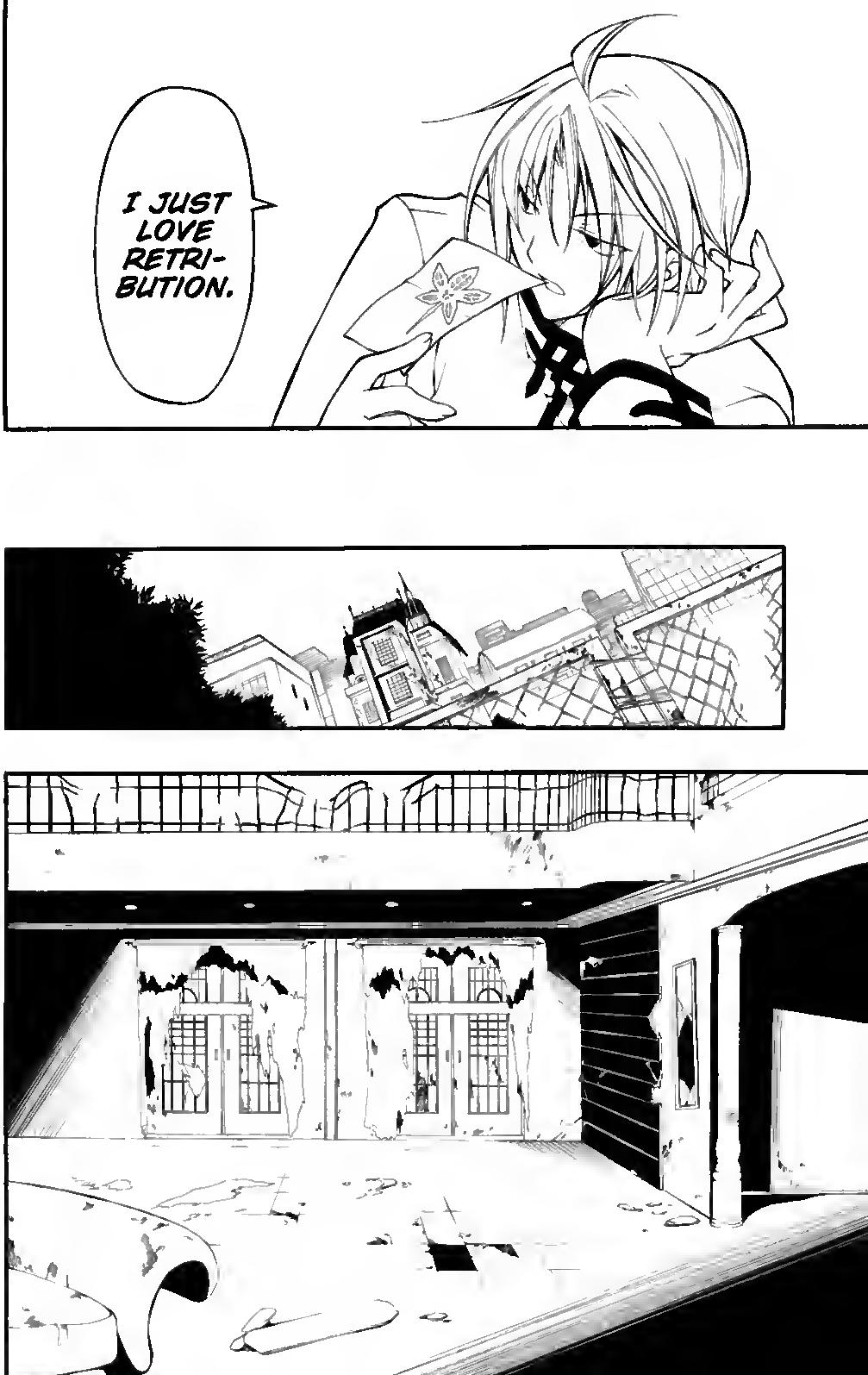
...
SO?
...


KASA (RUSTLE)
HOW'D IT TURN OUT?

THAT SUCH A PIPSQUEAK WOULD BE SENT BARGING IN HERE...
...IS AN INSULT.
SERI-OUS-LY...
DOKA (FLUMP)


YOU MUST BE KID-DING.
WERE YOU ACTUALLY GOING TO TOUCH HER?

...IT'S NOT NECES-SARILY A BAD THING.
LET THEM BE CARELESS, AND THEY'LL SELF-DESTRUCT ON THEIR OWN.
THAT FALLEN ANGEL.
AFTER-WARD YOU CAN TEACH HIM A LESSON...
...AND REMIND HIM JUST WHOM HE HAS INSULTED.
...HMPH.
WELL, IT IS A SERIOUS CRIME TO SWIPE THE DIVINE POWER THAT'S MEANT FOR ME...
...SO PUNISH-MENT WOULD BE APPRO-PRIATE.


I JUST LOVE RETRI-BUTION.

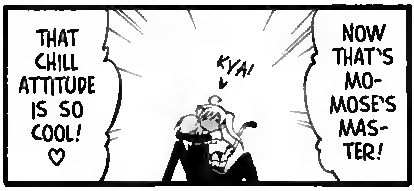
MO-
MOSE.
TON
(HOP)
MO-
MO-
SE'S
BACK
...
...SA-
TSUKI.

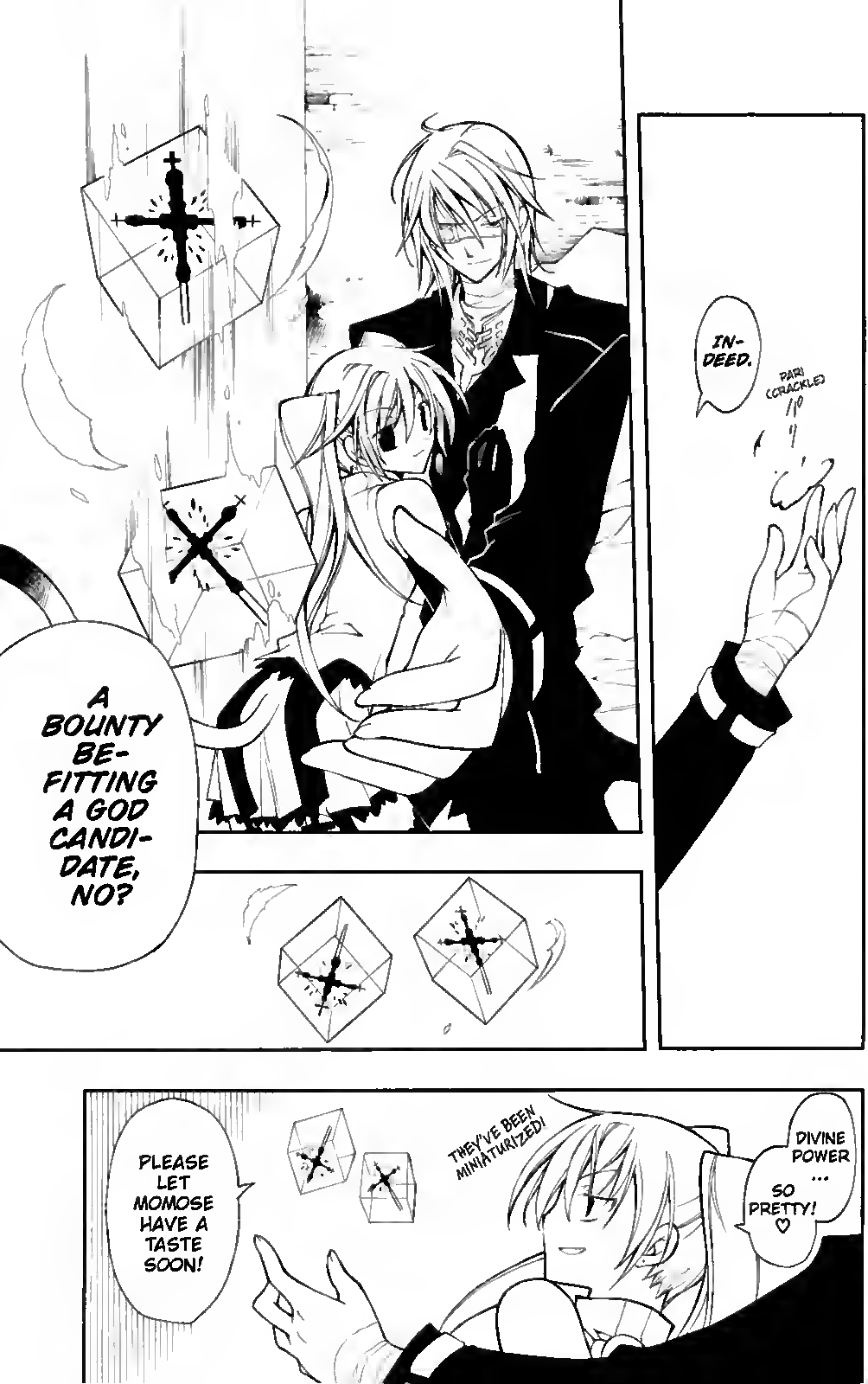
WELCOME BACK, MOMOSE.

SORRY, MOMOSE COULDN'T KILL HIM.

IN A GOOD MOOD 'COS YOU GOT THE FIRST OF THE DIVINE RELICS?

AW.
IT'S OKAY.
YOU CAN TRY AGAIN NEXT TIME YOU'RE IN THE MOOD FOR IT.

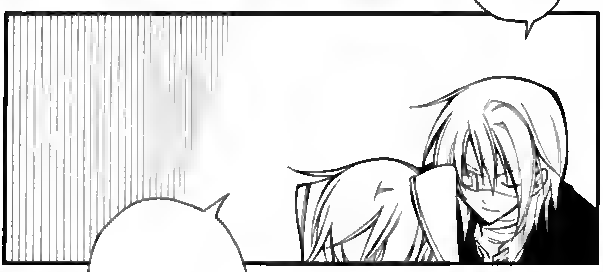

THAT CHILL ATTITUDE IS SO COOL! ♡
KYA!
NOW THAT'S MO-MOSE'S MAS-TER!


A BOUNTY BE-FITTING A GOD CANDI-DATE, NO?
IN-DEED.
PARI (CRACKLE)
DIVINE POWER ... SO PRETTY! ♡
THEY'VE BEEN MINIATURIZED!
PLEASE LET MOMOSE HAVE A TASTE SOON!

NOT YET.

OOH!♡ MORE... TOUCH MOMOSE MORE ...SA-TSUKI. ...

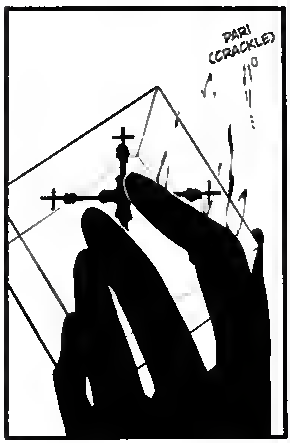
PERO PERO CLICK


AFTER WE'VE GATHERED MORE DIVINE POWER...

...AND MY BECOMING GOD IS ASSURED.

SA-TSUKI ...
...MOMOSE LOVES YOU THE MOST.
WHEN SATSUKI BECOMES GOD...
...COULD HIS VERY FIRST ACT BE TO KILL MOMOSE?
CER-TAIN-LY...
...I'LL GRANT YOUR WISH.
IT'S REALLY JUST AN EXTENSION OF MY OWN DESIRE.

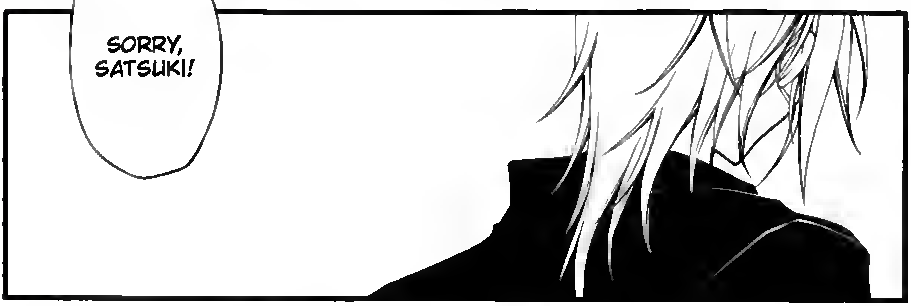
IT'S SO EXCIT-ING...
...GATH-ERING UP DIVINE POWER.

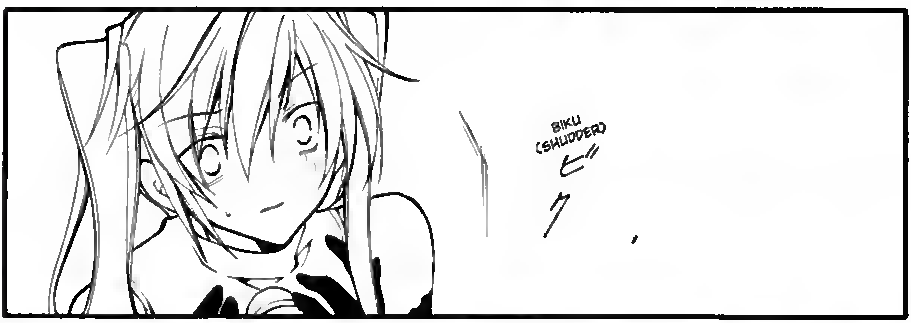

PARI (CRACKLE)

SINCE MY WISH...
...CANNOT BE GRANTED UNLESS I BECOME GOD EITHER.

HUH ...!?
BACHI (BZAP)
PASHI (SNATCH)
HUH !? WHAT ...?
KAN (TNK)
KAN
...
THE "MARKING" OF A DOG...

S-SORRY...
WHEN DID THEY ...!?
HUH? A MARK-ING!?
NO WAY!


SORRY, SATSUKI!


BIKU (SHUDDER)

AHN...
IT... IT'S NOT LIKE THAT...
MOMOSE... HAD NO IDEA SHE'D BEEN MARKED...
S-SORRY! PLEASE FORGIVE HER...
KATA (TRMBL)
NO... PLEASE DON'T HATE MOMOSE...
SHE'LL DO ANY-THING...
KATA
KATA

NO...!
NO! PLEASE... PLEASE...!
FORGIVE HER, SATSUKI...!
DIVINE POWER: CHECK.
YO.

I THOUGHT I'D RETRIEVE THE DIVINE POWER PERSONALLY...

...YOU FILTHY FALLEN ANGEL.

THE MARK'S POWER DISTRACTED ME...I DIDN'T NOTICE THEM BREAKING IN...

...WATCH YOUR MOUTH.

SOMEONE'S IN A BAD MOOD.

NOT ...

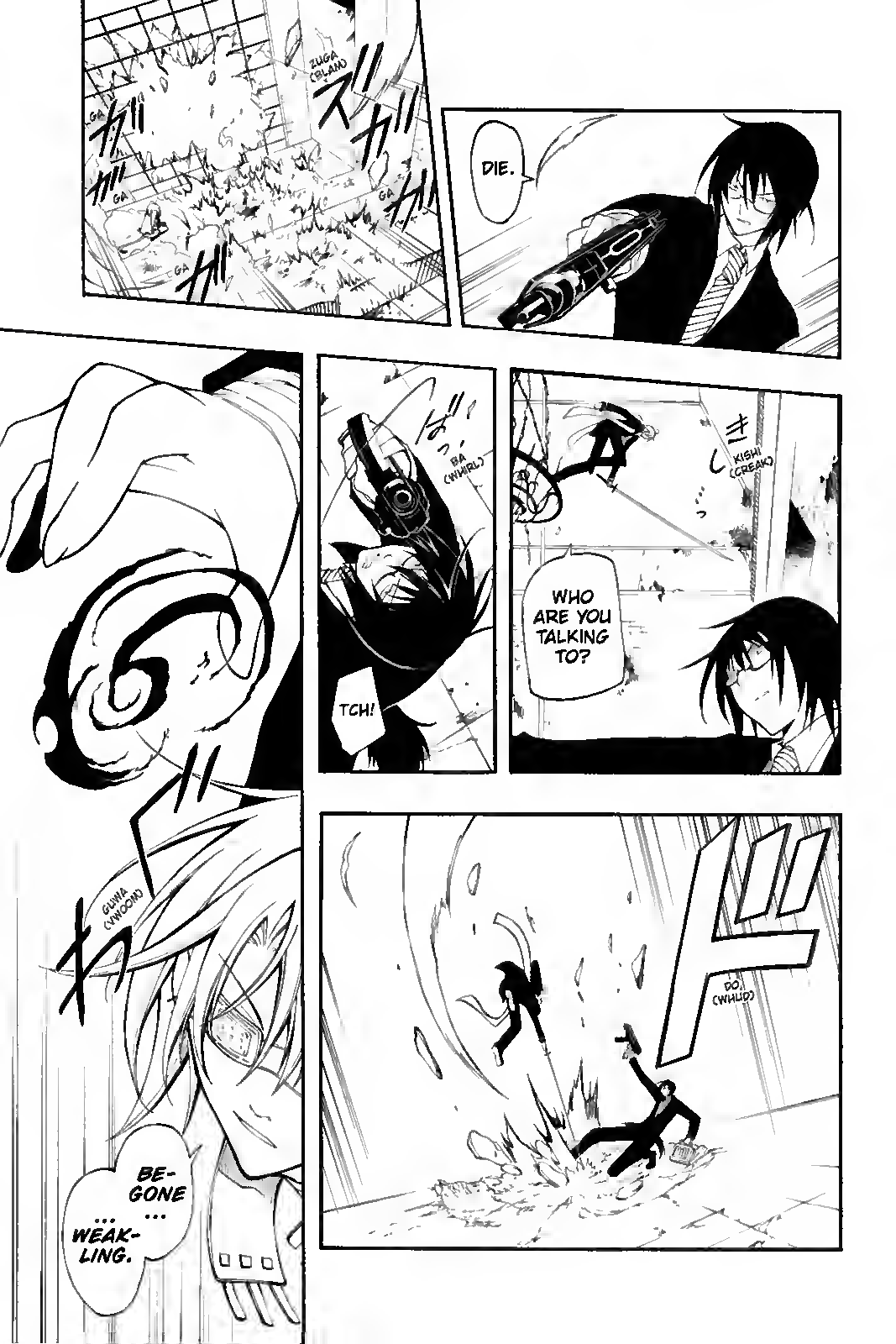
...THAT I'M OBLIGED TO CHEER YOU UP.

GACHAN (CLICK)
NOW, THEN.
PACHIN (SNAP)
...A BARRIER?
KIIIIIIIII (WHEEE)
...SO I PINCHED HIS SPELL FORMULAS AND ADDED MY OWN TOUCH.
I MET A CASTER OF BINDING AND BARRIER SPELLS YESTERDAY...
RESPOND TO MY FORMULA.
MANIFEST!
NOW BEGINS YOUR RETRIBUTION...

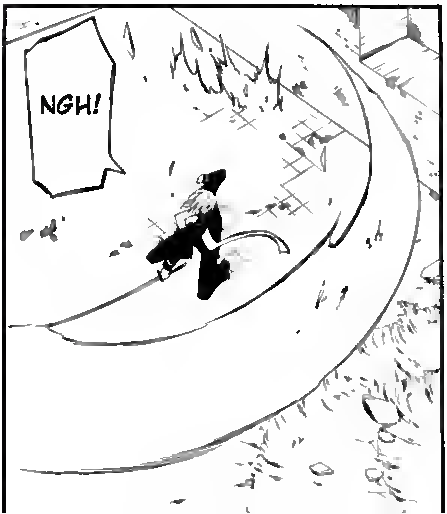
イイ
(VIIIEEE)

...WITHIN THIS BARRIER THAT'S IDEAL FOR SLAUGHTERING FALLEN ANGELS!
...
WHAT A PAIN...
KASHAN (KACHANO
YOU REALLY ...
...CAN'T HELP GETTING ON PEOPLE'S NERVES, CAN YOU.

HOWL-
ING
LORD.

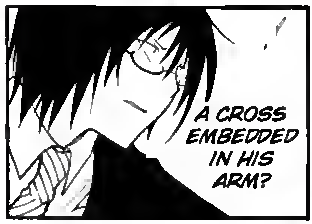

ZUGA (SLAM)
GA
GA
GA
GA
DIE.
BA (WHIRL)
TCH!
KISHI (CREAK)
WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?
GUHA (WHOOP)
BE-GONE ... WEAK-LING.
DO (WHLIP)

IS IT THE BARRIER!? MY ARM IS BURNING HOT...!
WHAT ...!?


NGH!

ZUGA
GA
GA

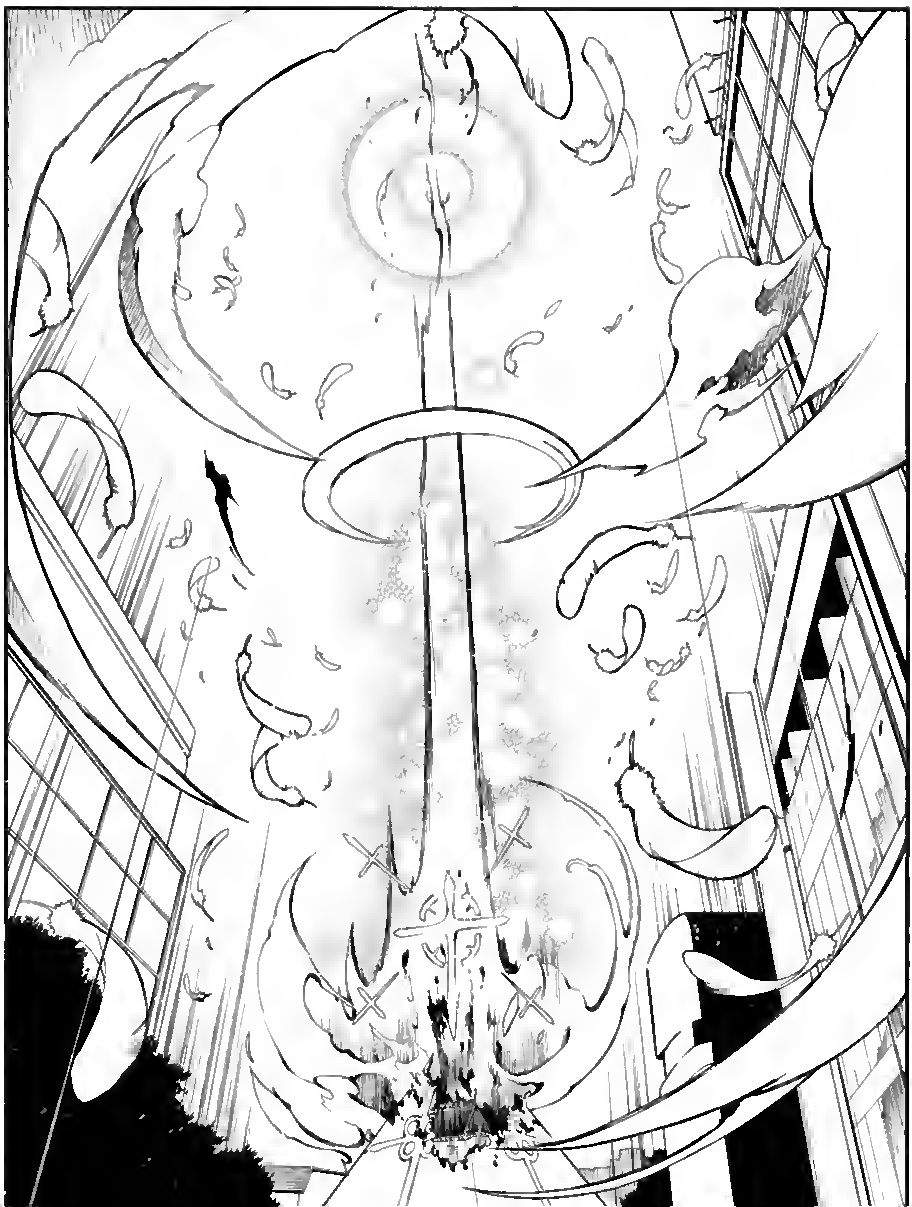
I TOLD YOU.
IT'S A BARRIER FOR FALLEN ANGELS.
NOW, DIE!
...I SEE.


A CROSS EMBEDDED IN HIS ARM?

I SEE NOW.
THEN ...
...I'LL USE A DIFFERENT POWER.

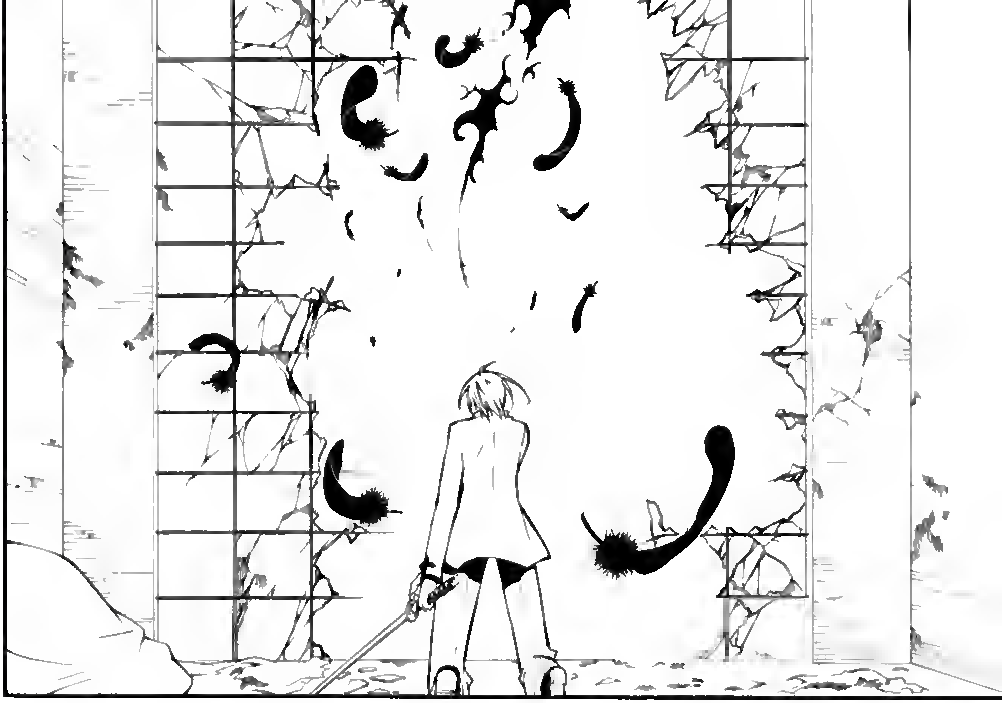
A BARRIER THAT NULLIFIES A FALLEN ANGEL'S POWER, IS IT?

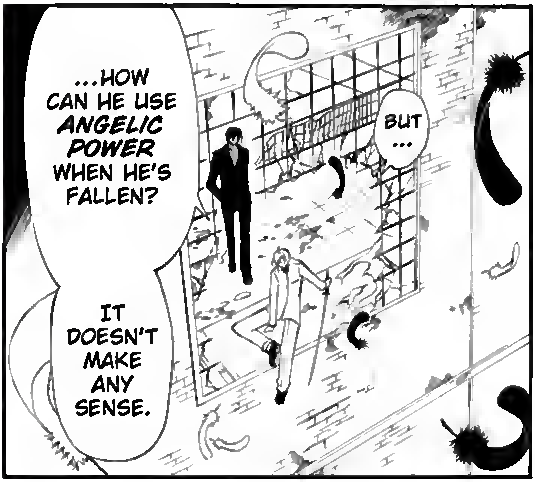
SU (FSH)
HOLY DESTRUC-TION.
...HEY...
WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?

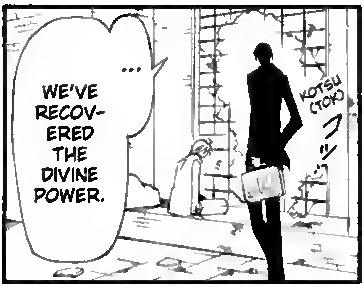


THE BARRIER HAS BEEN DESTROYED.
TCH...
THAT'S ANGELIC POWER!
ARE YOU KIDDING ME...!?
ZAA (WHSH)
HOW...
!
...DARE YOU...!?

...DON'T GET YOURSELF SO WORKED UP.
THIS "CRUSADE" GAME HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN.
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US... IS WHETHER YOU PERCEIVE THE "TRUTH" OF THIS WORLD OR NOT.
I...
...JOINED THE GAME...
...IN ORDER TO DESTROY THAT.
WILL YOU EVEN RECOG-NIZE IT?
OR...

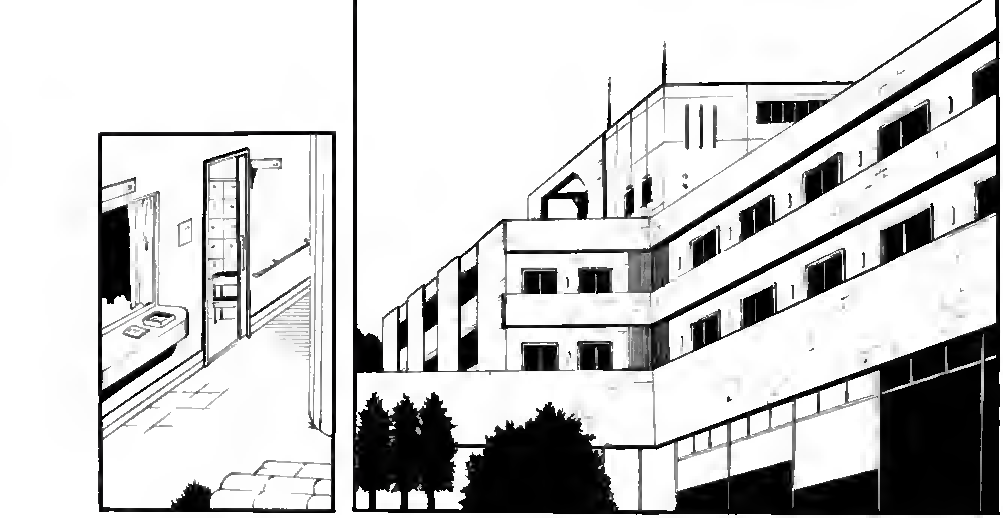


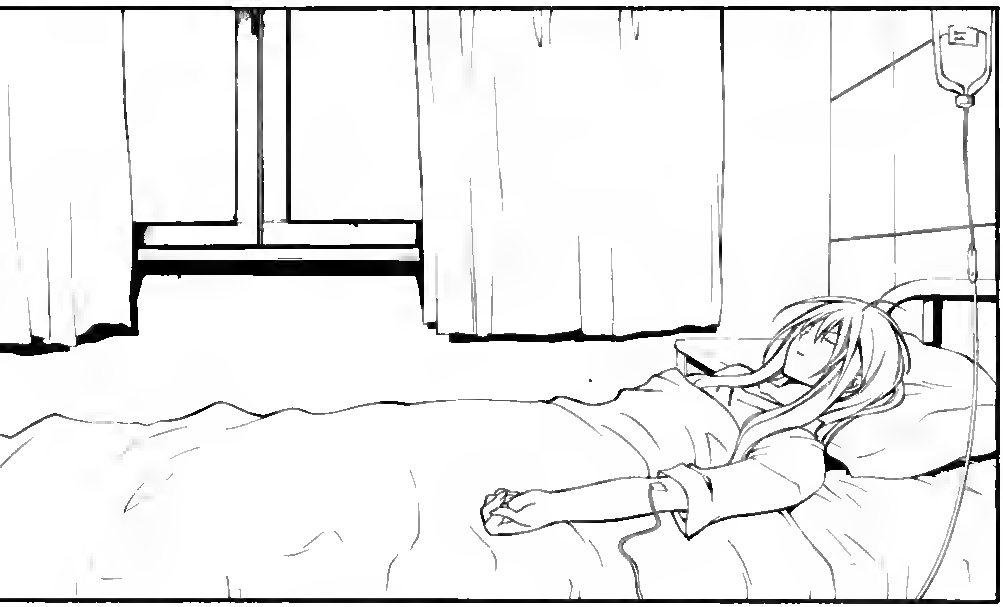

...HOW CAN HE USE ANGELIC POWER WHEN HE'S FALLEN?
BUT ...
IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE.


...
WE'VE RECOVERED THE DIVINE POWER.
KOTSU (TOK)
コツ

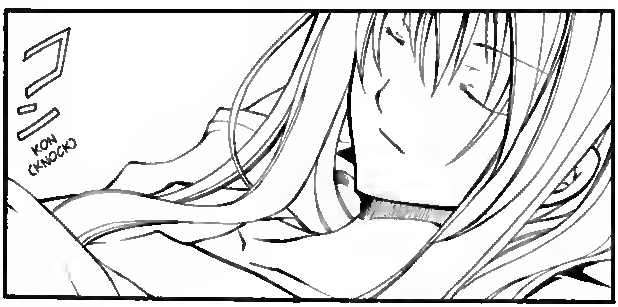
...YEAH.

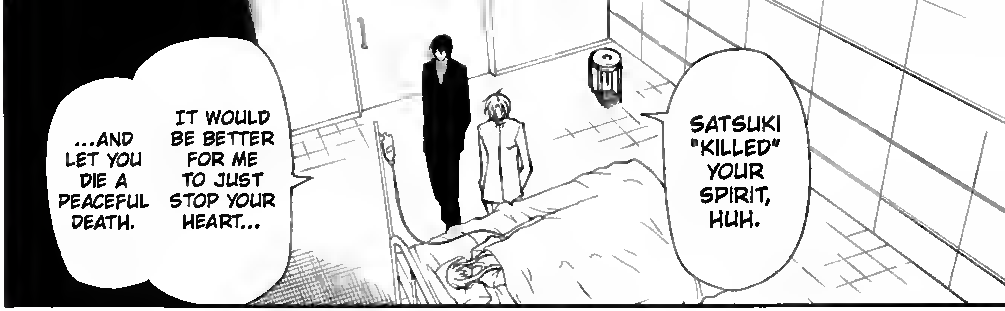
...MONSTER.

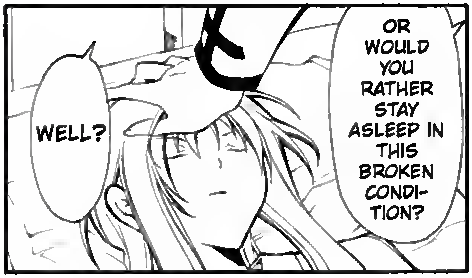




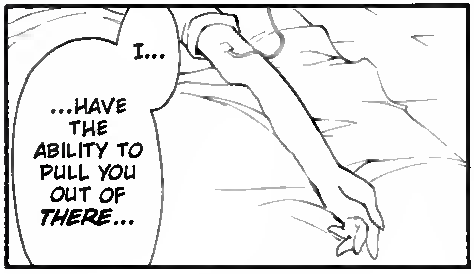
KON
コーン
...
WHAT A SORRY STATE YOU'RE IN, HALF-BREED.


コーン
KON (KNOCK)


SATSUKI "KILLED" YOUR SPIRIT, HUH.
IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR ME TO JUST STOP YOUR HEART...
...AND LET YOU DIE A PEACEFUL DEATH.

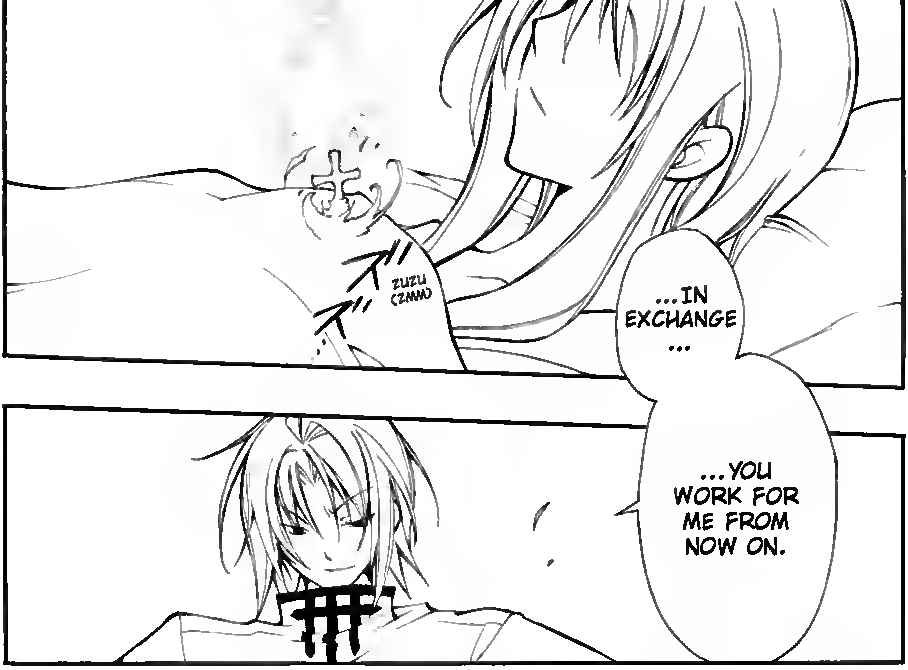

OR WOULD YOU RATHER STAY ASLEEP IN THIS BROKEN CONDI-TION?
WELL?

...HEY...
...WANT TO LIVE A LITTLE LONGER?

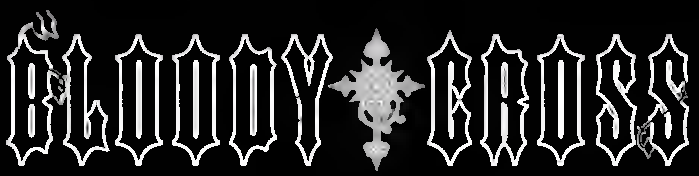

I...
...HAVE THE ABILITY TO PULL YOU OUT OF *THERE*...

...WITH THIS DIVINE POWER.

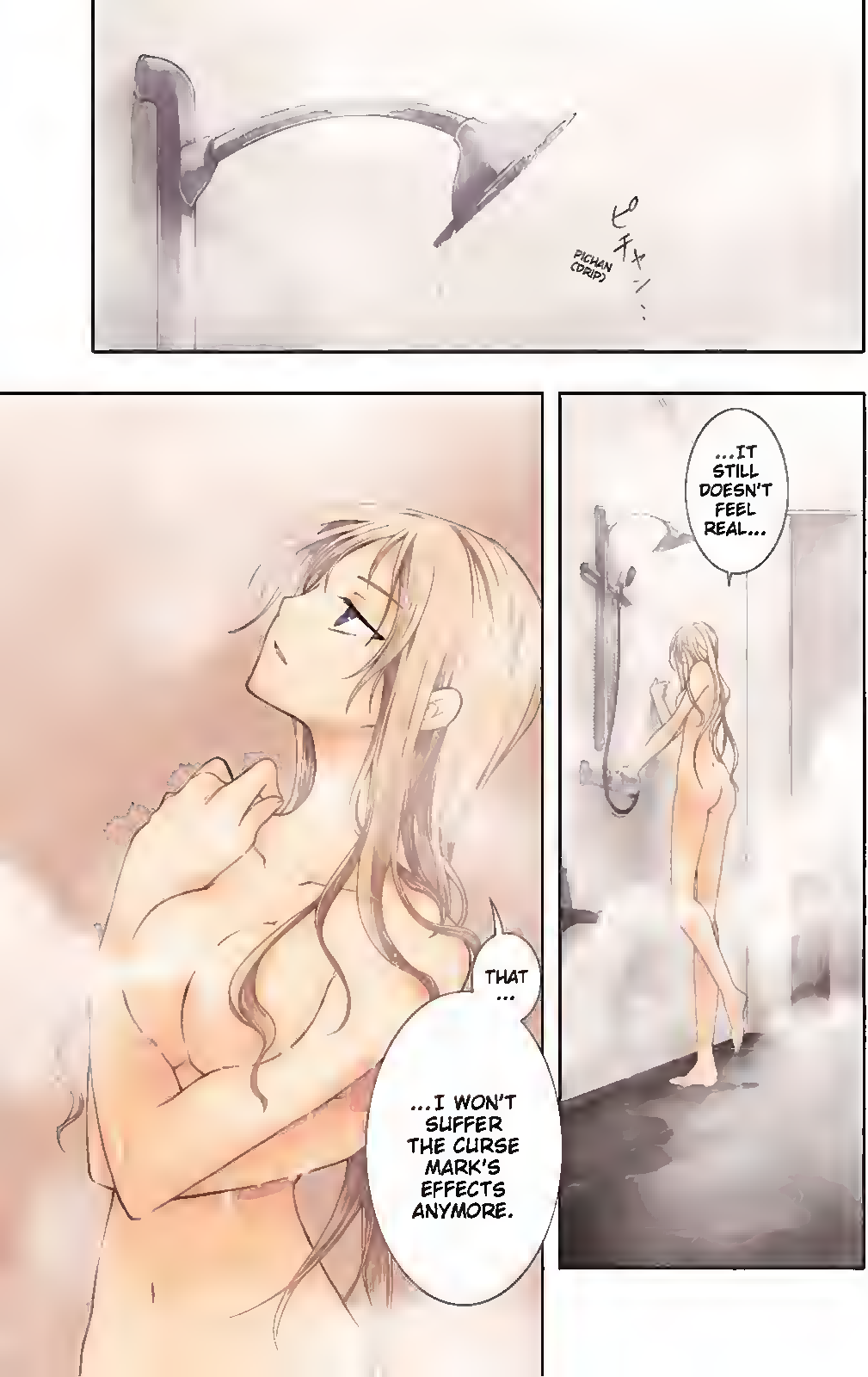
SHE REACTED.
...!
...HEH.
SHE REALLY IS GREEDY.
PIKU (TWITCH)
TON (TPP)


ZUZU (SMACK)
...IN EXCHANGE ...
...YOU WORK FOR ME FROM NOW ON.

HALF-BREED.


BLOODY CROSS

BLOODY CROSS


PICHAN (DRIP)
...IT STILL DOESN'T FEEL REAL...
THAT ...
...I WON'T SUFFER THE CURSE MARK'S EFFECTS ANYMORE.

Chapter 5
A New Shock

Chapter 5
A New Shock

BLOODY CROSS

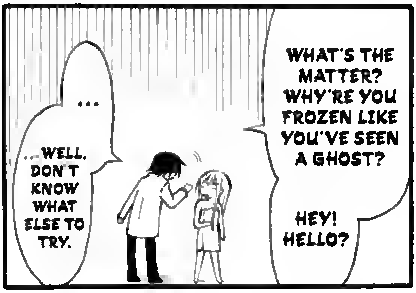
MY SPIRIT WAS "KILLED" AFTER THE CURSE WAS UNDONE...
...BUT IT WAS REVIVED AND RESTORED BY THAT PUREBLOOD.
I...
...SUR-VIVED.
...FARE-WELL.
NEVER AGAIN ...
I'LL NEVER BE KILLED BY MY OWN BLOOD NOW.

I DON'T HAVE...
...A LETHAL CURSE MARK ON MY CHEST ANYMORE.

IT'S COMPLETELY DISAPPEARED!
WHOA, IT'S TRUE!
OH... ...THAT'S RIGHT! LOOK!
MY CURSE MARK'S GONE TOO!
SEE! SEE!
MAN, THIS ROCKS!
WE BOTH FINALLY GOT OUR WISH—A LIFE WITHOUT AN EXPIRATION DATE...
AHHHHH! I'M GONNA LIVE TO SEE EIGHTY!

GUESS I'LL JUST TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO BURN THE IMAGE OF YOUR NAKED BODY ONTO MY RETINAS UNTIL YOU REAWAKEN.
MUKI (PEEL)

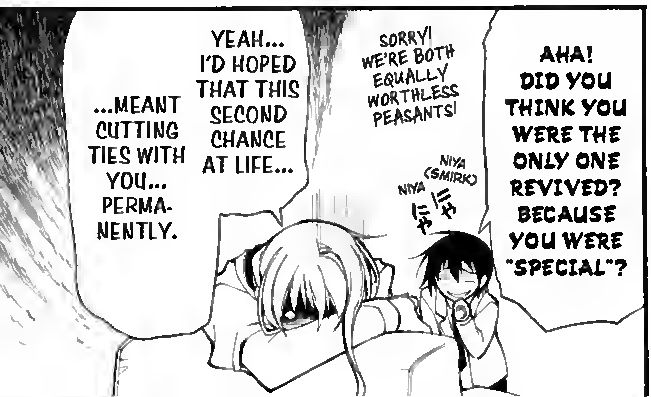
HMM?
HUH?

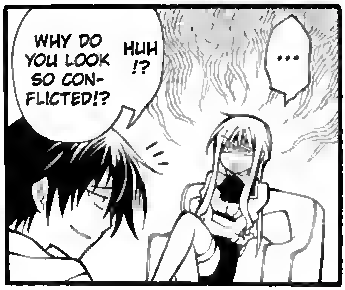

WHAT'S THE MATTER? WHY'RE YOU FROZEN LIKE YOU'VE SEEN A GHOST?
HEY! HELLO?
...
...WELL, DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO TRY.

DOGA (SLAM)
GO (WHACK)
GUSHA (CRUNCH)

EXPLAIN.
WHY THE ETERNAL HORNDOG SITS BEFORE ME CONVERTING OXYGEN INTO CARBON DIOXIDE AS ANY MAMMAL MIGHT DO.
UH... EXPLAIN WHAT, YOUR MAJ-ESTY?

YOU MEAN, WHY AM I ALIVE?
WELL... 'COS THAT PUREBLOOD IMPLANTED HALF OF THE DIVINE POWER INSIDE ME...
...AFTER THAT ILLUSION OR WHATEVER BUTCHERED MY SPIRIT TOO, OBVIOUSLY.


AHA! DID YOU THINK YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE REVIVED? BECAUSE YOU WERE "SPECIAL"?
SORRY! WE'RE BOTH EQUALLY WORTHLESS PEASANTS!
NIYA (SMIRK)
NIYA
YEAH... I'D HOPED THAT THIS SECOND CHANCE AT LIFE...
...MEANT CUTTING TIES WITH YOU... PERMA-NENTLY.


...
HUH !?
WHY DO YOU LOOK SO CON-FLICTED!?

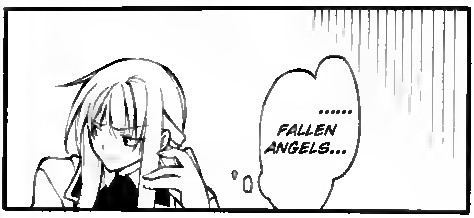
...THAT GUY WHO "KILLED" OUR SPIRITS...
...KNOW ANY-THING ABOUT HIM?
ON AN UNRE-LATED TOPIC...

...AWW, DON'T SAY THAT.
TON (TAP)

THOSE WHO DEFILED THEIR BODIES AND SPIRITS AND BECAME DEMONS...
THOSE WHO WERE ONCE ANGELS...

YOU SURE YOU DON'T KNOW ANY-THING?
... NOTH-ING.

...
I ONLY KNOW THAT BLACK FEATHERS EQUALS FALLEN ANGELS!
AND I QUOTE: "BLACK FEATHERS ARE UNLUCKY."


.....
FALLEN ANGELS...

...
THAT RE-MINDS ME...
JUST BEFORE I LOST CON-SCIOUS-NESS...
...I VAGUELY REMEMBER HEARING HIM SAY HE'S IN THE RUNNING TO BECOME THE NEXT GOD TOO.
...
HMPH.
SO HE AND THAT PURE-BLOOD...
...BOTH RECEIVED ORACLES AND ARE GATHERING GOD'S RELICS, HUH?
...
GOD'S
...
...
RELICS
...?

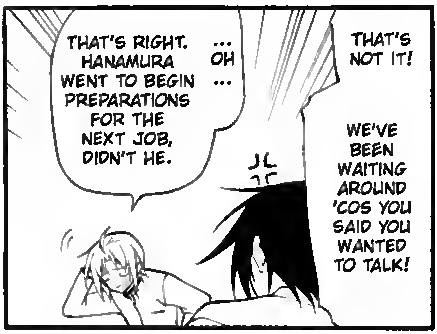
THINGS LIKE THAT PROPHECY BOOK AND ITS KEY...
...THAT HOLD DIVINE POWER.
—...YEAH. "RELICS."
YOU DIDN'T KNOW?
NO ONE KNOWS A THING ABOUT 'EM...
NOT HOW THEY CAME TO BE...
...WHEN THEY CAME TO BE, OR EVEN HOW MANY THERE ARE.

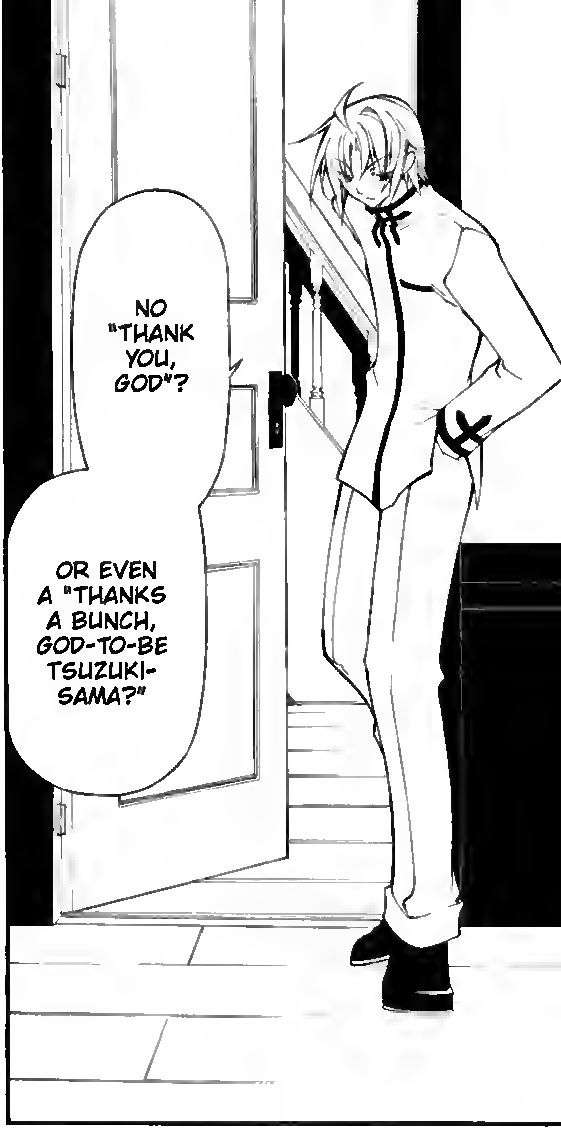
THEY ARE...
...TREASURES SHROUDED IN MYSTERY.

...HUH.
SO THERE'S MORE OF THEM BESIDES THAT PROPHECY BOOK?
...SO...?
YUP... NO MATTER WHO YOU ASK, DIVINE POWER IS SHROUDED IN MYSTERY.
TCH.
...I'D HAVE GONE AFTER SOMETHING WITH LESS COMPETI-TION.
IF I'D KNOWN...
HA HA...
NOT LIKE WE HAD INTEL ON ANY OTHERS.
...WELL...
...THERE DOES SEEM TO BE MORE TO IT THAN JUST "ALMIGHTY POWER"...
KATSU (TOK)
...WHAT'S THIS? BARELY REVIVED, AND YOU'RE PLANNING YOUR NEXT TREASURE HUNT ALREADY?
YOU TWO REALLY ARE GREEDY.

SLEEPY...
KUA (YAWN)

HMM?
MOST OF OUR WORK IS DONE AT NIGHT, SO IT'S FINE.
O LORD...
...IT'S EVENING ALREADY.
YOU SLEPT WAY LATE!


THAT'S RIGHT. HANAMURA WENT TO BEGIN PREPARATIONS FOR THE NEXT JOB, DIDN'T HE.
...OH...
THAT'S NOT IT!
WE'VE BEEN WAITING AROUND 'COS YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO TALK!

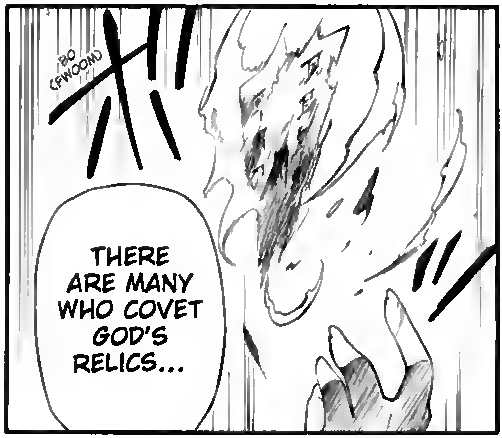

NO "THANK YOU, GOD"?
OR EVEN A "THANKS A BUNCH, GOD-TO-BE TSUZUKI-SAMA?"

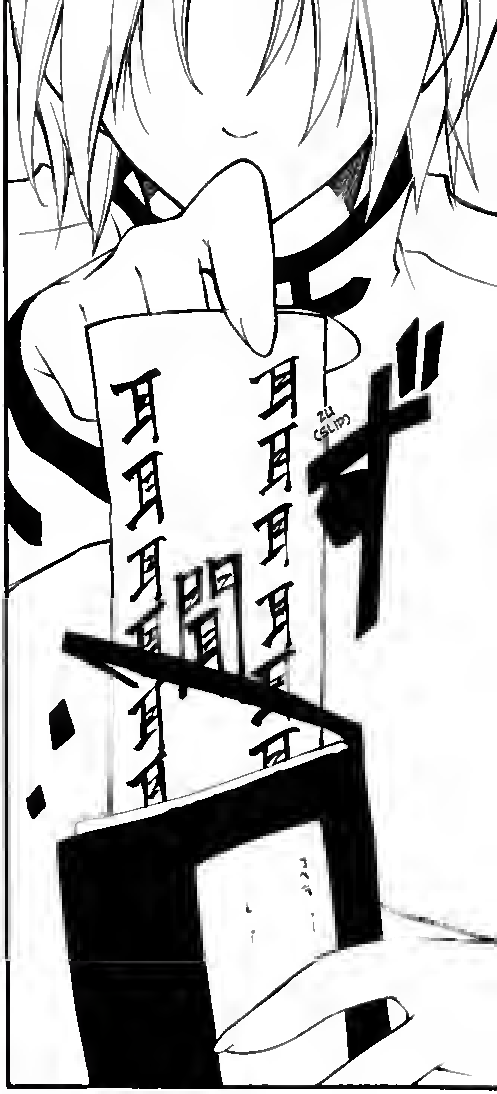
SOMETHING ABOUT GOD'S RELICS.
HOW ABOUT YOU TELL US SOMETHING AS A REWARD FOR WAITING PATIENTLY?

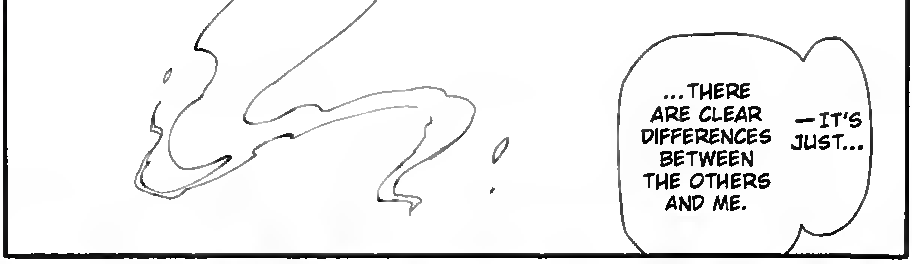
WELL, THEY'RE POWERS THAT I, AS GOD CANDIDATE, AM ENTITLED TO, OF COURSE.
TSUKA (STRIDE)
TSUKA
...RELICS, EH?
HIRA (WAVE)
YES, INDEED.
—...
SEEMS THAT FALLEN ANGEL'S AFTER 'EM TOO.

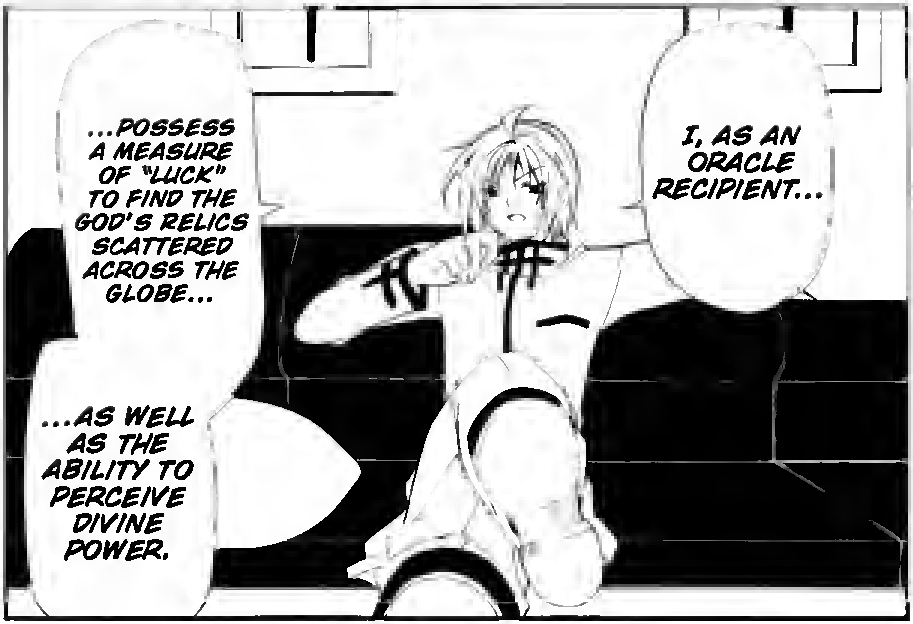
ギョ
GYO (SHOCK)
!

INCIN-ERATE.

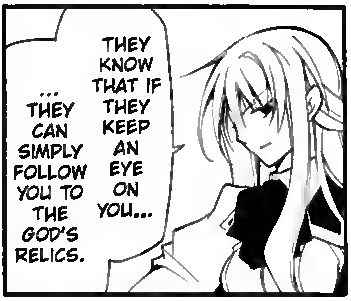

BO (WOOSH)
THERE ARE MANY WHO COVET GOD'S RELICS...

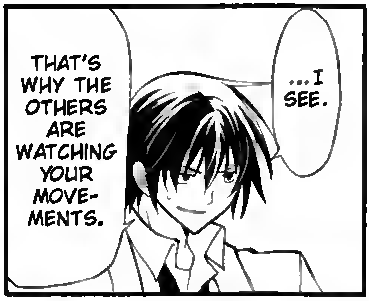

ZU (SLIP)
耳耳耳

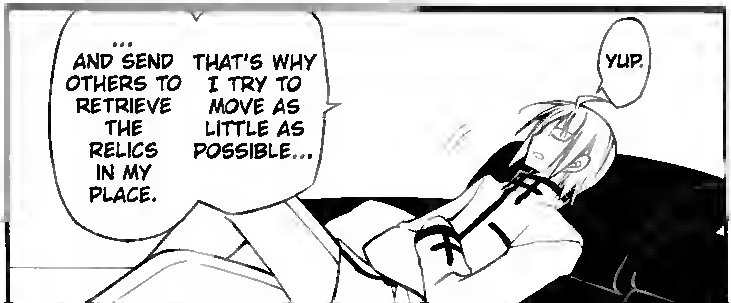

—IT'S JUST...
...THERE ARE CLEAR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE OTHERS AND ME.


I, AS AN ORACLE RECIPIENT...
...POSSESS A MEASURE OF "LUCK" TO FIND THE GOD'S RELICS SCATTERED ACROSS THE GLOBE...
...AS WELL AS THE ABILITY TO PERCEIVE DIVINE POWER.

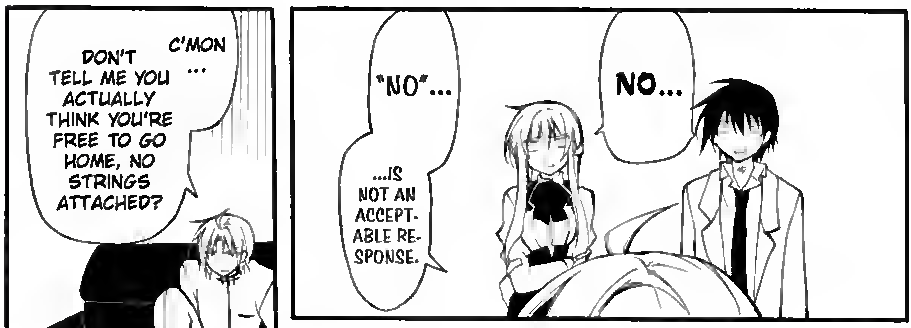
WHICH...
...BRINGS ME TO...
PAN (CLAP)


THEY KNOW THAT IF THEY KEEP AN EYE ON YOU...
...THEY CAN SIMPLY FOLLOW YOU TO THE GOD'S RELICS.

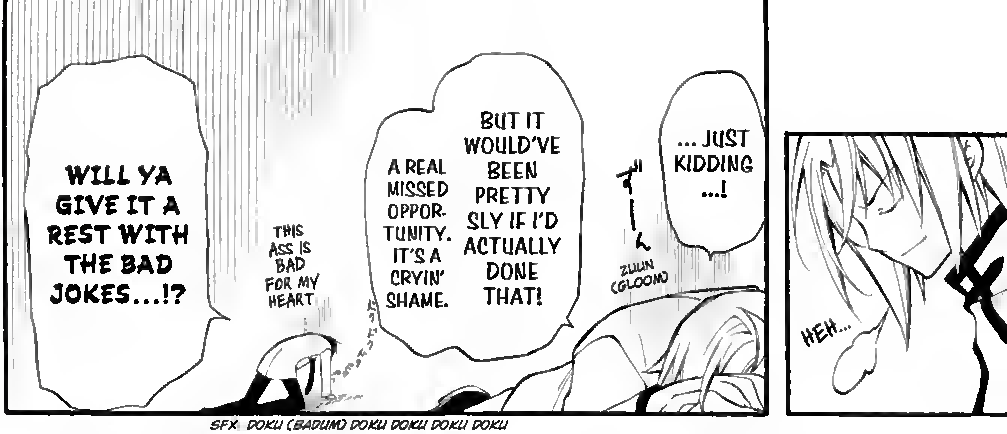

...I SEE.
THAT'S WHY THE OTHERS ARE WATCHING YOUR MOVEMENTS.


YUP.
THAT'S WHY I TRY TO MOVE AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE...
...AND SEND OTHERS TO RETRIEVE THE RELICS IN MY PLACE.

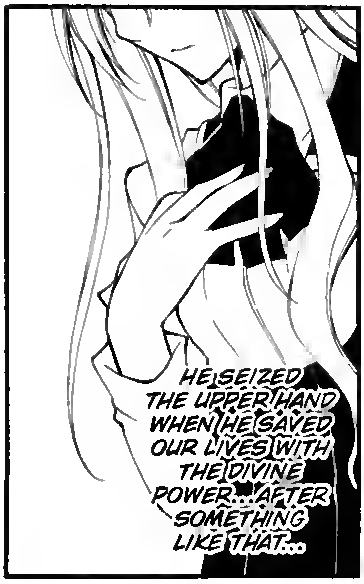
...YOU TWO...
...YOU WILL SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIVES WORKING AS MY SERVANTS.

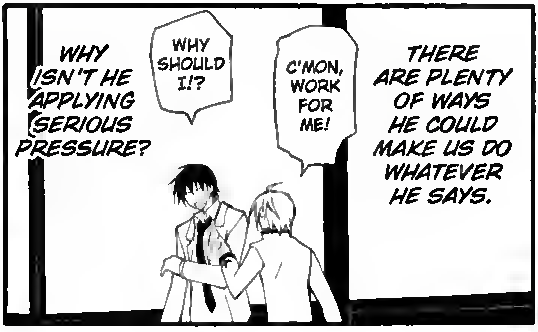

NO...
"NO"...
...IS NOT AN ACCEPTABLE RESPONSE.
C'MON ...
DON'T TELL ME YOU ACTUALLY THINK YOU'RE FREE TO GO HOME, NO STRINGS ATTACHED?

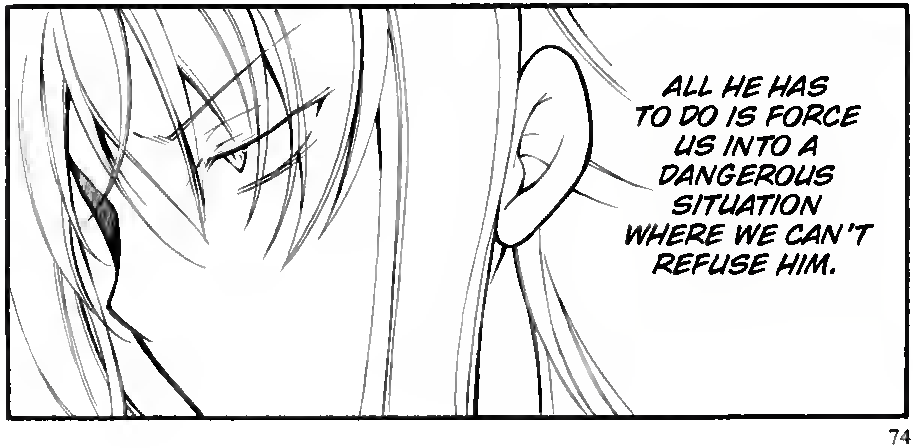
—YOU WERE GIVEN THE BOOK'S POWER!
THAT PROPHECY BOOK IS A FAIRLY HIGH-LEVEL RELIC OF GOD!!
...AND I...
GATA (THUD)
YOU'RE THE BRUTE!!
YOU DEMONS! BRUTES!!
WAAHN!
...THIS ATTITUDE IS THE REWARD I GET IN RETURN !!?
...I, HEART RACKED WITH GRIEF, SHARED THIS PIECE OF MY PRECIOUS, PRECIOUS DIVINE POWER WITH YOU, AND THIS...
I'M SORRY, MY MIXED-RACE COMRADES.
...BUT... ...YOU HAVE NO CHOICE.
YOU HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO OBEY ME.
NGH ...
...I ALSO PLANTED "BOMBS" OF SORTS INSIDE YOUR BODIES.
WHEN I GAVE YOU THE DIVINE POWER...
SU (SSK)

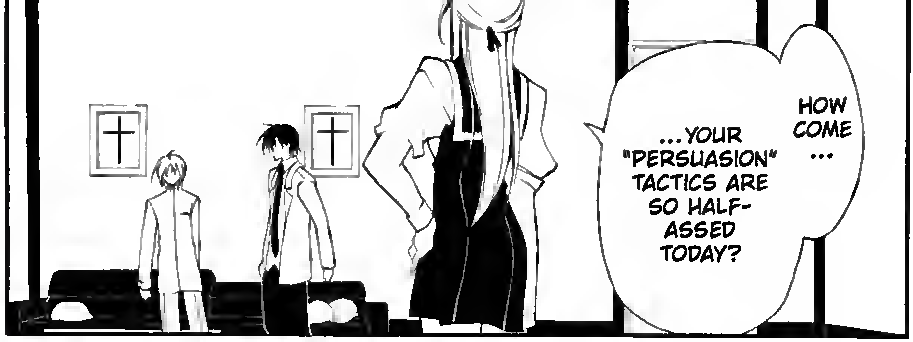

WILL YA GIVE IT A REST WITH THE BAD JOKES...!?
THIS ASS IS BAD FOR MY HEART
A REAL MISSED OPPORTUNITY. IT'S A CRYIN' SHAME.
BUT IT WOULD'VE BEEN PRETTY SLY IF I'D ACTUALLY DONE THAT!
... JUST KIDDING ...!
ZUUN (GLOOM)
HEH...

SFX: DOKU (BADUMP) DOKU DOKU DOKU DOKU



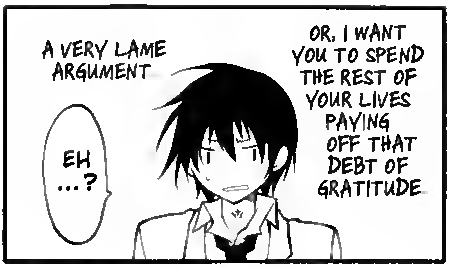

WHY ISN'T HE APPLYING SERIOUS PRESSURE?
WHY SHOULD I!?
C'MON, WORK FOR ME!
THERE ARE PLENTY OF WAYS HE COULD MAKE US DO WHATEVER HE SAYS.

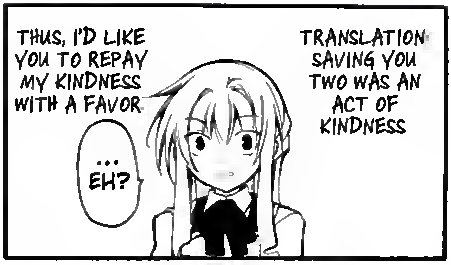


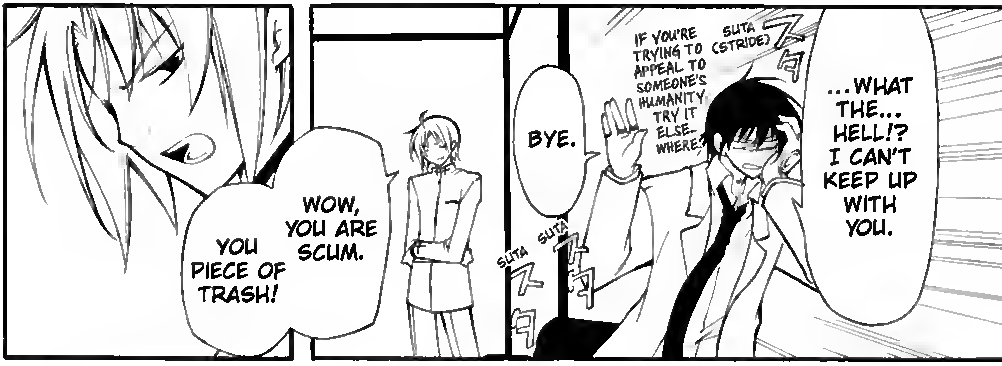

HOW COME ...
...YOUR "PERSUASION" TACTICS ARE SO HALF-ASSED TODAY?

...YOU MEAN ...
UM, WELL
...

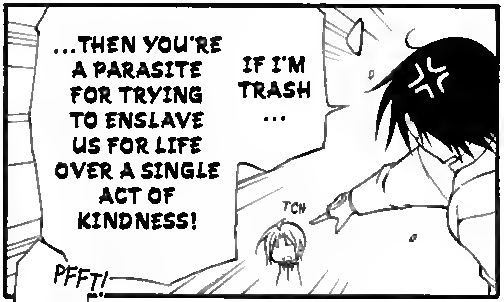
POKAN (GAPE)
ぽか
ARE YOU TWO REALLY SUCH LOWLY...
... SCUM!?
...YOU REALLY ...
...DON'T FEEL ANY OBLIGATION OF GRATI-TUDE...
...EVEN THOUGH I SAVED YOU OUT OF THE GOOD-NESS OF MY HEART?

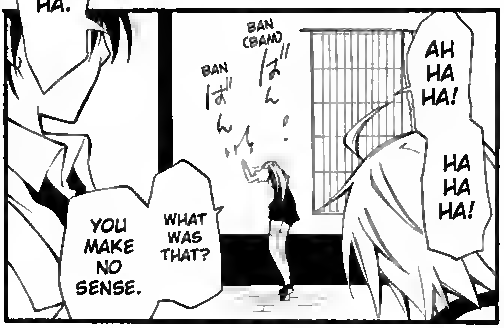

A VERY LAME ARGUMENT
EH ...?
OR, I WANT YOU TO SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIVES PAYING OFF THAT DEBT OF GRATITUDE


THUS, I'D LIKE YOU TO REPAY MY KINDNESS WITH A FAVOR
... EH?
TRANSLATION: SAVING YOU TWO WAS AN ACT OF KINDNESS


YOU PIECE OF TRASH!
WOW, YOU ARE SCUM.
BYE.
SUTA
SUTA
IF YOU'RE TRYING TO APPEAL TO SOMEONE'S HUMANITY, TRY IT ELSE-WHERE.
SUTA (STRIDE)
...WHAT THE... HELL!? I CAN'T KEEP UP WITH YOU.

HA...
...BUT... "DEBT OF GRATI-TUDE"...


...THEN YOU'RE A PARASITE FOR TRYING TO ENSLAVE US FOR LIFE OVER A SINGLE ACT OF KINDNESS!
IF I'M TRASH ...
TCH
PFFT!
...HA HA.


BAN
BAN (BANG)
AH HA HA!
HA HA HA!
WHAT WAS THAT?
YOU MAKE NO SENSE.

AH!
YEAH, I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD REPAY YOU.
HA-HA... THAT I DO UNDER-STAND.
A WOMAN AFTER MY OWN HEART!
THEN YOUR LIFETIME OF SERVITUDE STARTS—
DON (SAID)
EI (POINT)
...ONCE.
NO.
NOT FOR LIFE. JUST...

THAT SOUND GOOD TO YOU, HINATA?
...I SUP-POSE.
SHIBU
SHIBU (POUT)

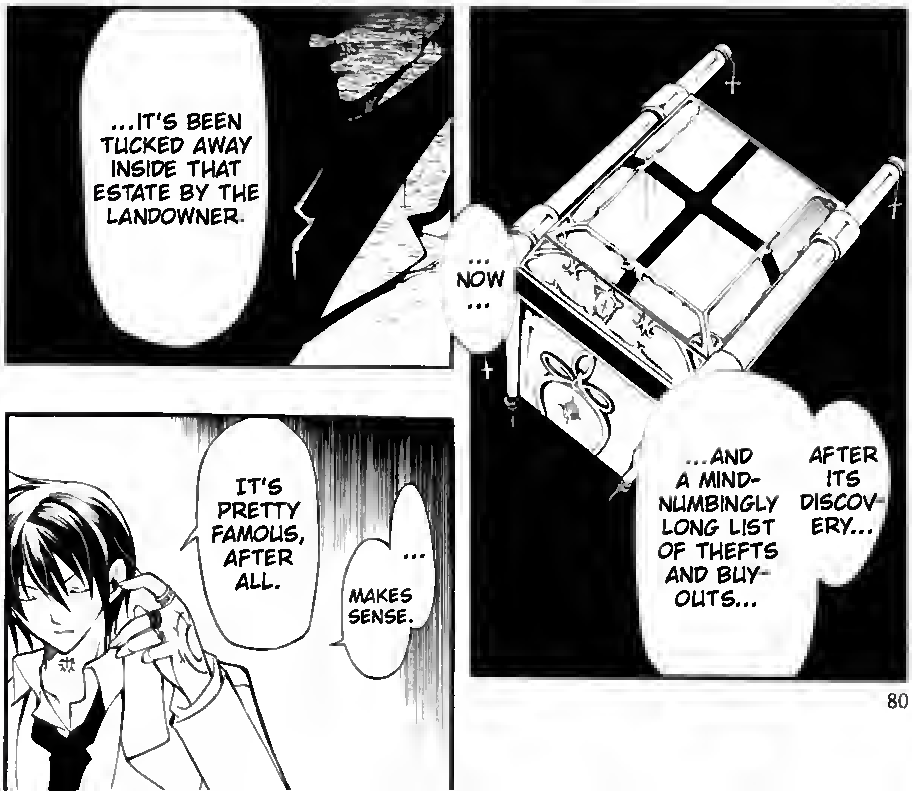
NIKO (GRIN)
...I JUST WANT ...
...TO MEET YOU IN THE MIDDLE.

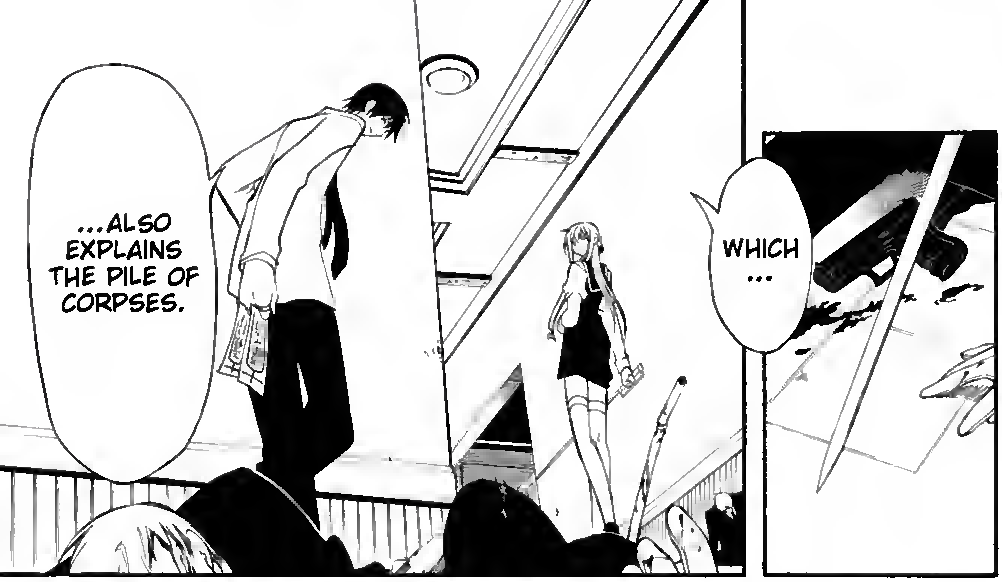
WE'LL WORK HARD FOR YOU ONE TIME...
...AND REPAY OUR DEBT IN FULL IN ONE SHOT.

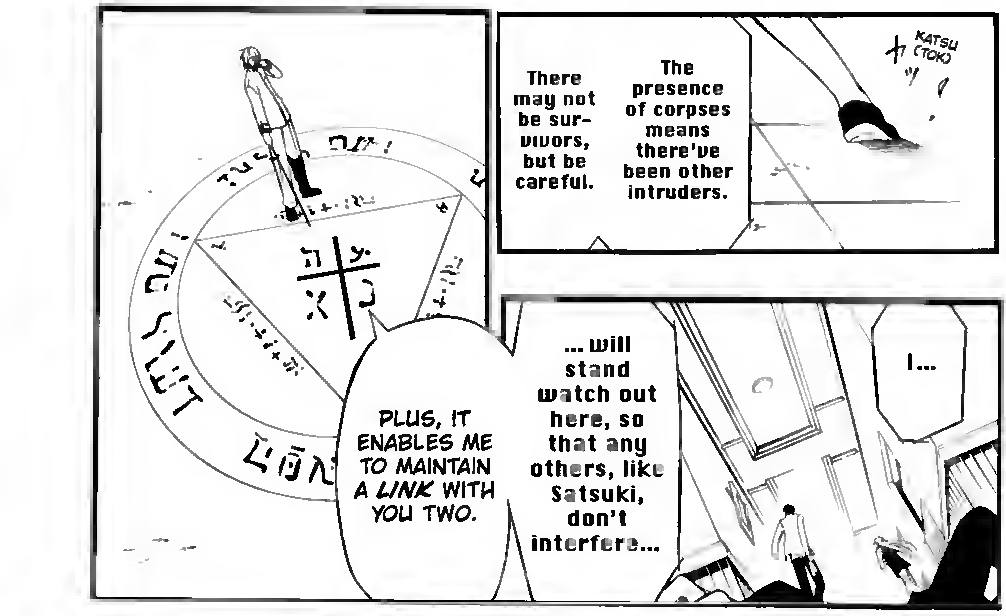
...IS NOT THE MIDDLE!
...THAT ...

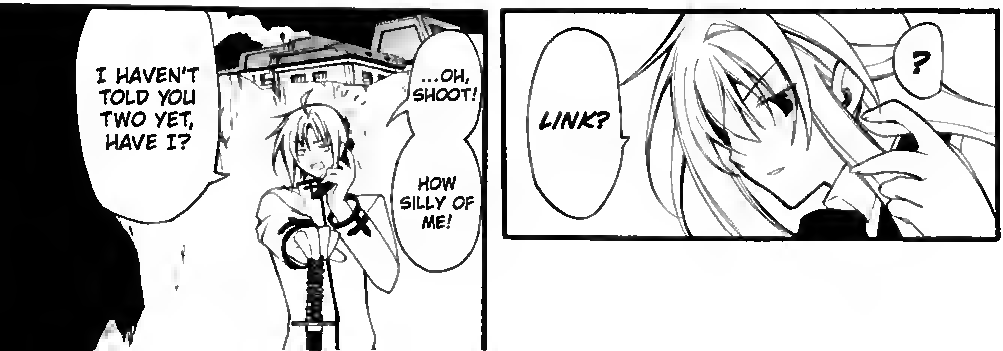
—...
OUR NEXT TARGET...
...IS THE RELIC OF GOD CALLED THE "HOLY ARK."

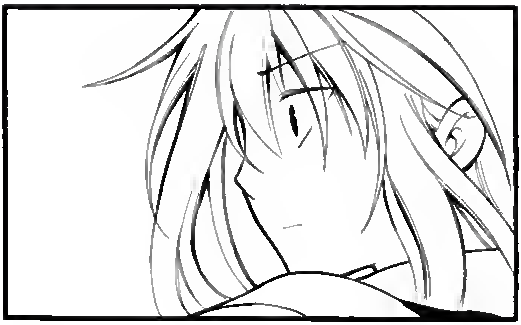
"Holy Ark?"
YEAH.
AN ARK... IS A TYPE OF LARGE CHEST.
THE HOLY ARK CONTAINS GOD'S COMMAND-MENTS.
ZARI (SCRAPE)
ZARI
ITS WHERE-ABOUTS WERE LONG UNKNOWN ...
...UNTIL RECENT-LY.


...IT'S BEEN TUCKED AWAY INSIDE THAT ESTATE BY THE LANDOWNER.
... NOW ...
AFTER ITS DISCOV-ERY...
...AND A MIND-NUMBINGLY LONG LIST OF THEFTS AND BUY-OUTS...
IT'S PRETTY FAMOUS, AFTER ALL.
... MAKES SENSE.

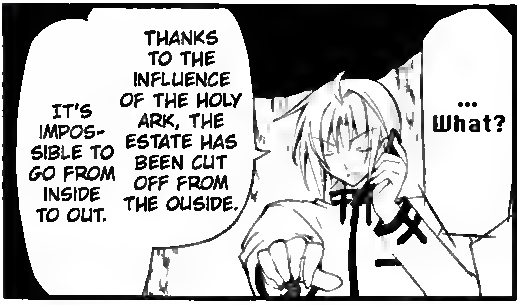

...ALSO EXPLAINS THE PILE OF CORPSES.
WHICH ...

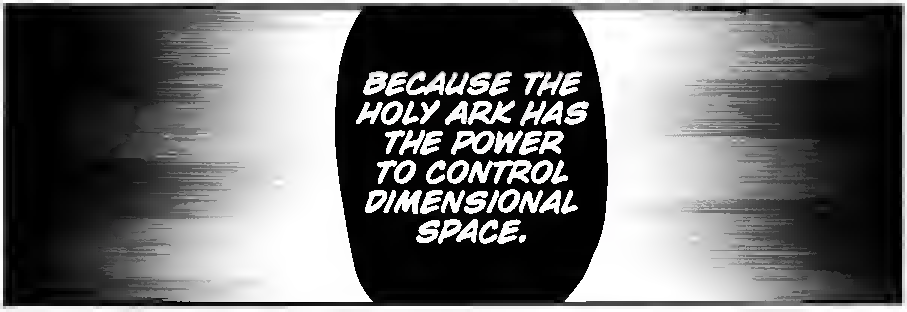

There may not be survivors, but be careful.
The presence of corpses means there've been other intruders.
KATSU (TOK)
PLUS, IT ENABLES ME TO MAINTAIN A LINK WITH YOU TWO.
... will stand watch out here, so that any others, like Satsuki, don't interfere...
I...

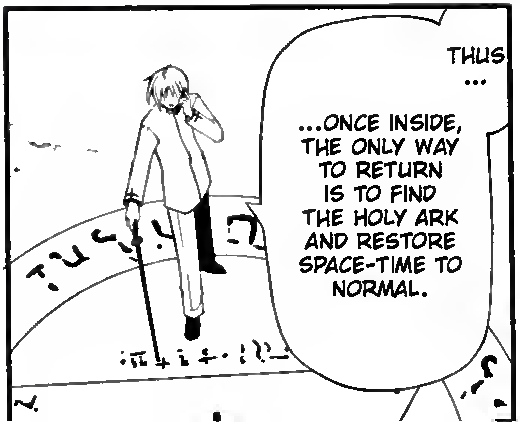

I HAVEN'T TOLD YOU TWO YET, HAVE I?
...OH, SHOOT!
HOW SILLY OF ME!
LINK?
?

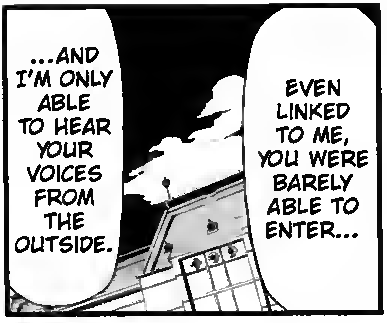


Once you enter the estate ...
...you can't leave.

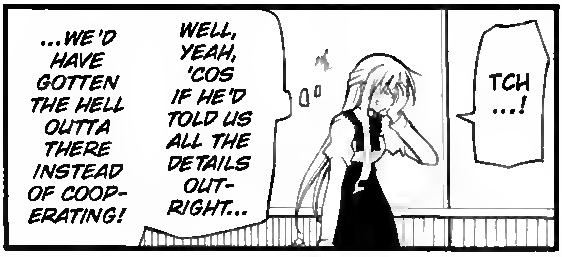

... What?
THANKS TO THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY ARK, THE ESTATE HAS BEEN CUT OFF FROM THE OUSIDE.
IT'S IMPOS-SIBLE TO GO FROM INSIDE TO OUT.


BECAUSE THE HOLY ARK HAS THE POWER TO CONTROL DIMENSIONAL SPACE.

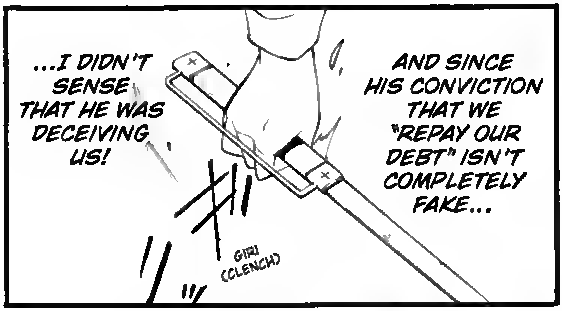

THUS ...
...ONCE INSIDE, THE ONLY WAY TO RETURN IS TO FIND THE HOLY ARK AND RESTORE SPACE-TIME TO NORMAL.

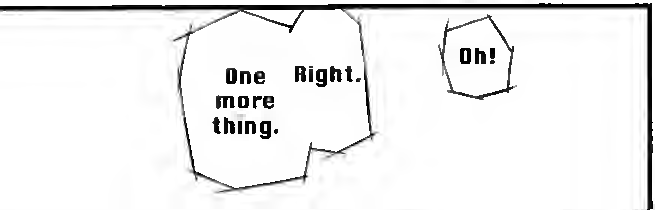

EVEN LINKED TO ME, YOU WERE BARELY ABLE TO ENTER...
...AND I'M ONLY ABLE TO HEAR YOUR VOICES FROM THE OUTSIDE.

...TRAPPED US!!!
HE...
I fervently pray that you emerge before you starve to death.


...WE'D HAVE GOTTEN THE HELL OUTTA THERE INSTEAD OF COOP-ERATING!
WELL, YEAH, 'COS IF HE'D TOLD US ALL THE DETAILS OUT-RIGHT...
TCH ...!

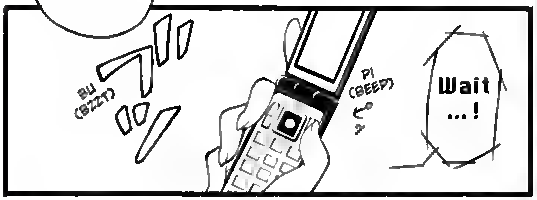
YOU...! HOW DARE YOU!?
Pipe down.
YOU WERE PLANNING TO USE US FOR THIS JOB ALL ALONG!


...I DIDN'T SENSE THAT HE WAS DECEIVING US!
AND SINCE HIS CONVICTION THAT WE "REPAY OUR DEBT" ISN'T COMPLETELY FAKE...
GIRI (CLENCH)


One more thing.
Right.
Oh!

I'll trade you its antidote for the Holy Ark.
THAT BASTARD... HE'S GOT ALL HIS BASES COVERED!

I EAGERLY LOOK FORWARD TO WITNESSING YOUR MIGHTY EFFORT...
...TO CLEAR A LIFETIME'S WORTH OF DEBT.
GOOD LUCK.


BU (BUZZ)
PI (BEEP)
Wait ...!

There may be no bombs in your bodies...
...but I did slip in some poison.

...I SWEAR I'LL GET BACK OUT THERE AND CLOBBER HIM!
WITH A CORNER OF THE HOLY ARK!

GA (WHAM)

DO (BOOM)
ZOKU (SHUDDER)
HNH ...!!
WHAT ...?
FEAR JUST WENT SHOOTING THROUGH MY BODY...
WHAT WAS THAT IMPACT? THAT POWER ...?
ALL MORTALS...
...HAVE BEEN PURGED.
OOOOO (WHOOO)

BY MY BLADE I HAVE PROTECTED...
...THE SECRETS OF THE RELIC OF GOD.
ZU (SMP)

BY MY BLADE I HAVE PROTECTED...
...THE SECRETS OF THE RELIC OF GOD.
ZU (SHP)

GARI (BITE)
DIS-GUST-ING...
...!
BLI (SPIT)
SHE'S A HALF-VAMPIRE JUST LIKE ME.
... THAT WOM-AN!

THERE ARE STILL OTHERS SKULKING AROUND.

OH?

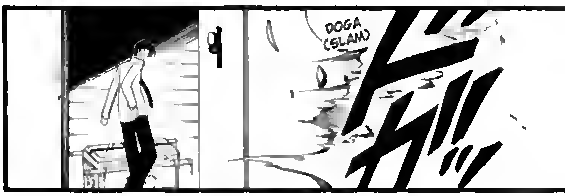
THAT POWERFUL AURA CAME FROM HER...?
...

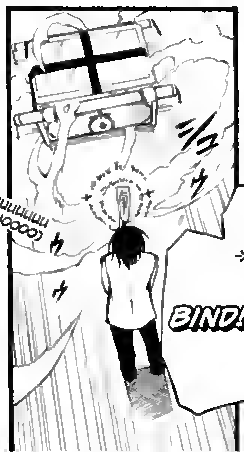
H-HEY, TSUKI-MIYA!
I FOUND THE HOLY ARK!
BA (DASH)
HUH!?

OH!

GO
(WHOOSH)

TAKING THE ARK AND RUNNING OFF?


DOGA
(SLAM)


SHUUUUUU
(WHOOOO)
OM
BIND!

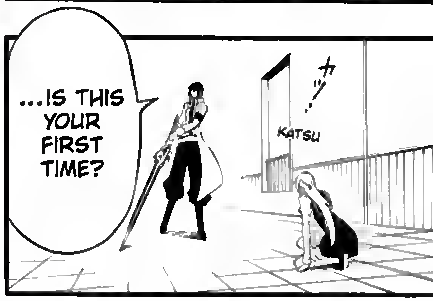
TCH...
GETTING THE HOLY ARK COMES FIRST!

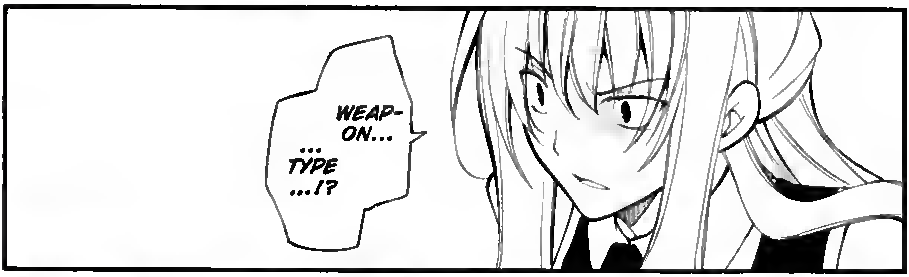
GOKUN (GULP)
...I SEE.
YOU'RE BOTH MIXED-RACE.
WHA...!?
DOGA (SLAM)
GAP! (BITE)
WHAT'S GOING ON?
IT'S NOT THE HOLY ARK...
THE AURA OF A DIFFERENT RELIC IS EMANATING FROM THE ESTATE!
...WHAT...?
PIKU (TWITCH)

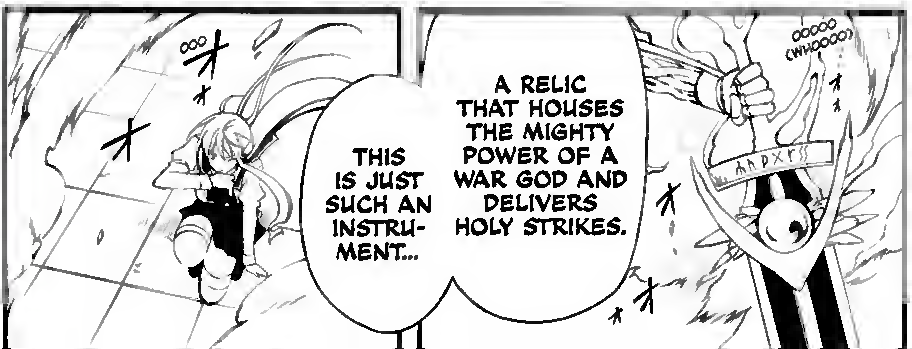
ARE YOU SEEING A WEAPON-TYPE RELIC OF GOD...
...FOR THE FIRST TIME?

KATSU (TOKO
KATSU
...TELL ME...

KATSU

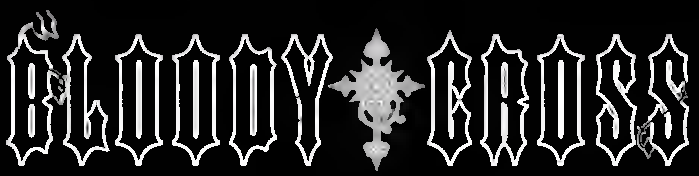

...IS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME?
KATSU


WEAP-ON...
...TYPE...!?


THIS IS JUST SUCH AN INSTRU-MENT...
A RELIC THAT HOUSES THE MIGHTY POWER OF A WAR GOD AND DELIVERS HOLY STRIKES.
(WHOOOO)

GUNGNIR: SPEAR OF THUNDER!
GOD'S RELIC!

LET'S MAKE A BREAK FOR IT!
I HAVE THE HOLY ARK!
TSUKI-MIYA!!
...YOU HAVE NO CHANCE OF ESCAPING.
...AGAINST THIS SPEAR, WHICH BOASTS THE LONGEST RANGE OF PURSUIT AMONG THE DIVINE WEAPONS...
DEATH IS A CER-TAINTY.
NOT THE SMALLEST SHRED OF FLESH SHALL REMAIN.

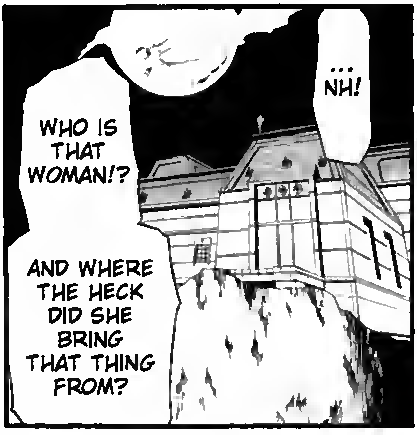

BLOODY CROSS

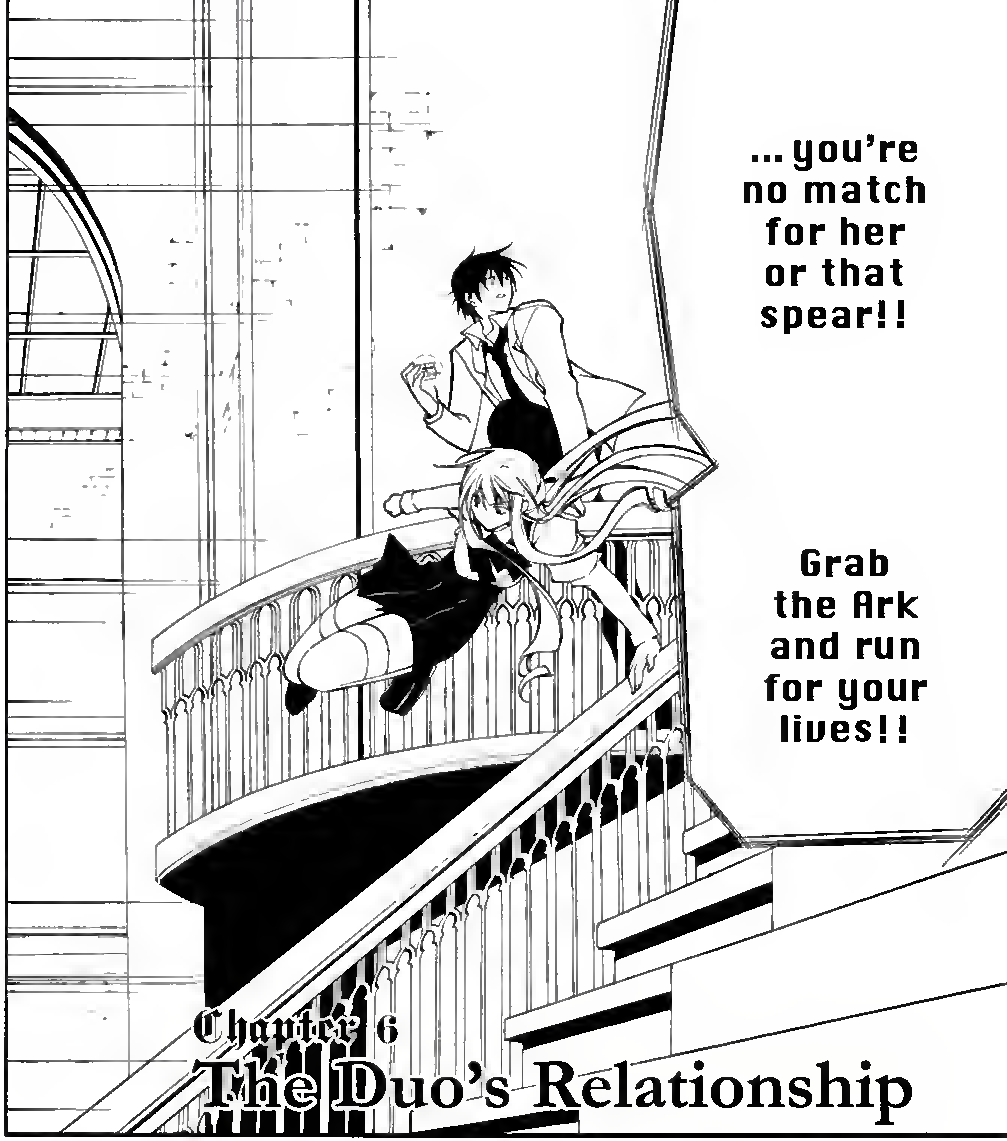
BLOODY CROSS

...GUNGNIR: SPEAR OF THUNDER!
THE WEAPON-TYPE RELIC OF GOD...

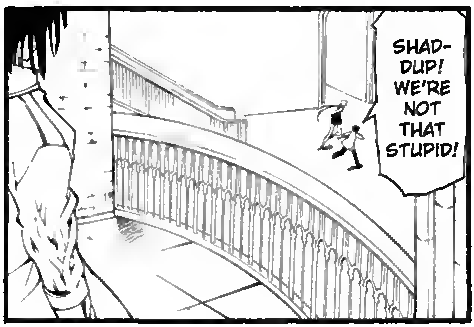
...HANG ON A MINUTE!
DID SHE SAY GUNGNIR?

TCH!
IN ANY CASE...
EVEN AS AN ORACLE RECIPIENT, I'VE ONLY HEARD OF THAT WEAPON-TYPE RELIC, I'VE NEVER SEEN IT...


...NH!
WHO IS THAT WOMAN!?
AND WHERE THE HECK DID SHE BRING THAT THING FROM?

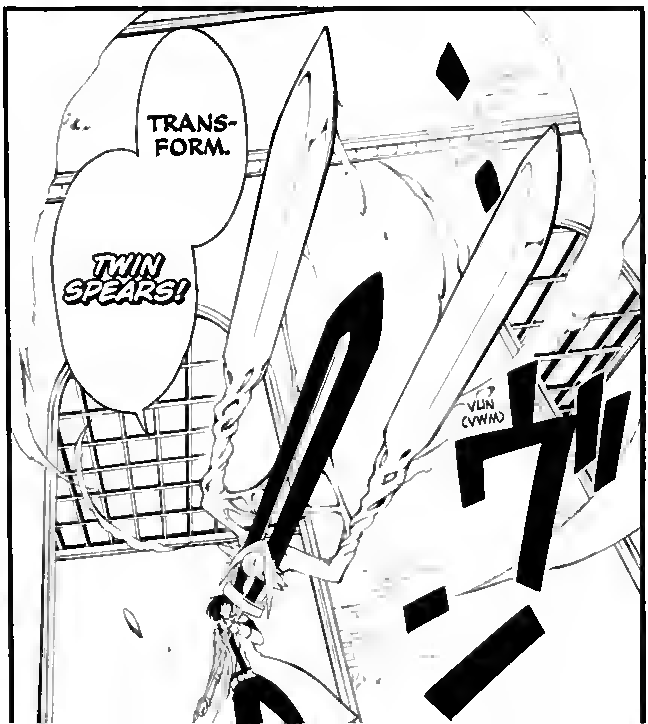


Chapter 6
The Duo's Relationship



IN THE FACE OF THE RELIC KNOWN AS THE "SPEAR THAT ALWAYS HITS ITS MARK"...
...FLIGHT IS FOLLY.

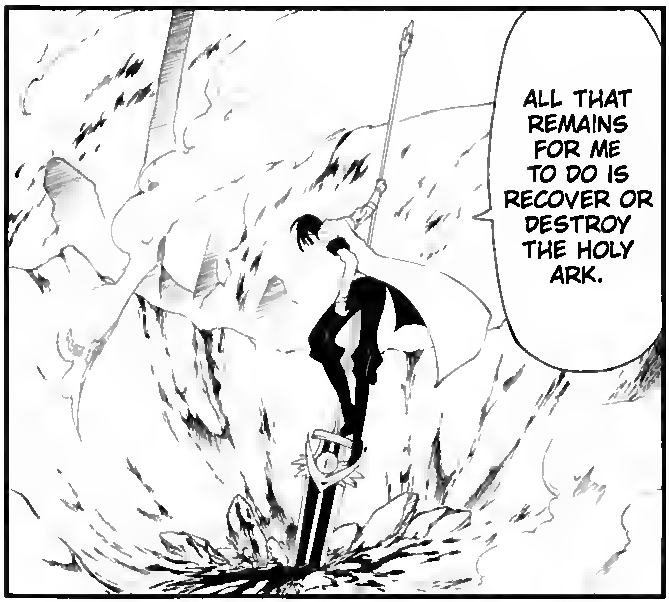
GU (SHAT)
SKEWER THEM!


TRANS-FORM.
TWIN SPEARS!
VLIN (VWHO)

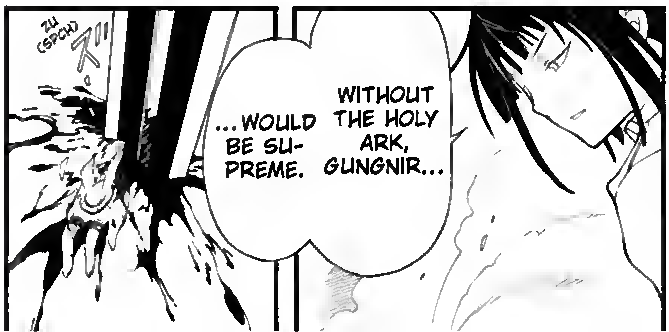
ドゴ
CHSOOMJ
JOS

SCH
CHWOOSH

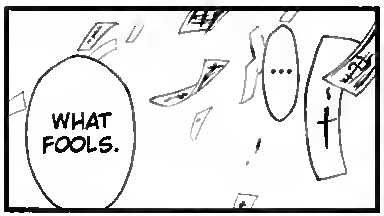
DOO (THWOOM)


ALL THAT REMAINS FOR ME TO DO IS RECOVER OR DESTROY THE HOLY ARK.

...ALL SIGNS OF LIFE HAVE VANISHED.


ZU (SFX)
...WOULD BE SUPREME.
WITHOUT THE HOLY ARK, GUNGNIR...

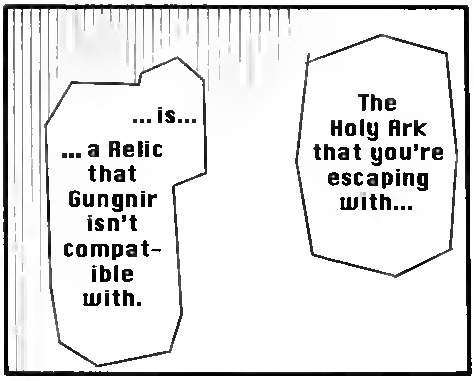
DUM-
MIES
...

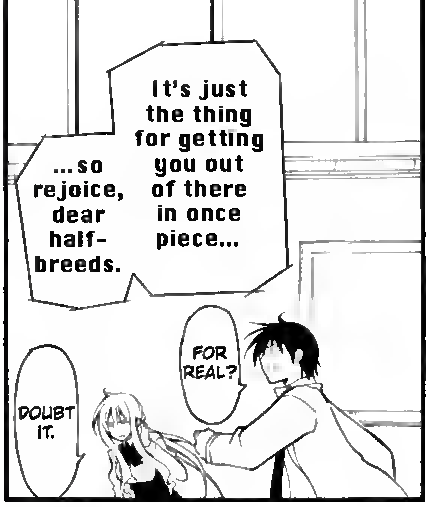

...
WHAT
FOOLS.

...WHERE
DID THEY
RUN?

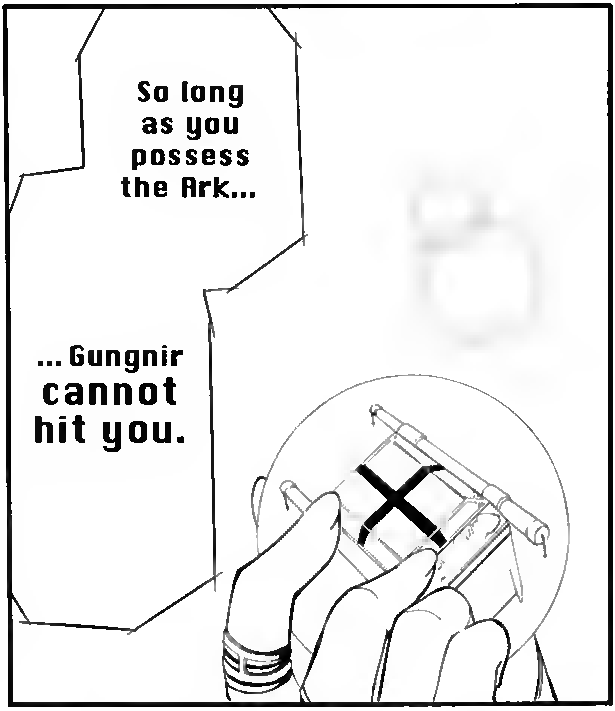
ZAAA
SHOOSH

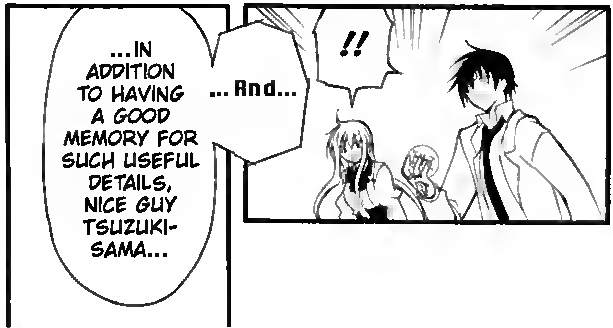
YOU SAID WE COULD USE THE ARK TO RESTORE SPACE-TIME...
...
WHERE'S THE EXIT?
SO?
...but at the moment, using the Ark would give away our position...
...and get us skewered by that "Gungnir."
JUST RELAX.
I REMEMBERED SOMETHING THAT MIGHT HELP WITH THAT.


... is...
... a Relic that Gungnir isn't compat-ible with.
The Holy Ark that you're escaping with...


...so rejoice, dear half-breeds.
It's just the thing for getting you out of there in once piece...
FOR REAL?
DOUBT IT.

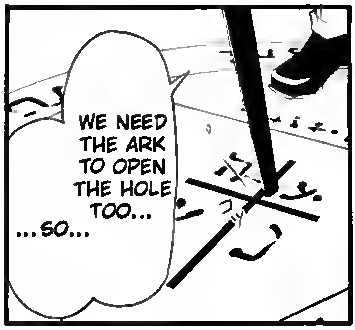
...ALSO HAS A SUPER-COOL PLAN.
SO LISTEN CLOSELY, MY DULL-WITTED DUO.

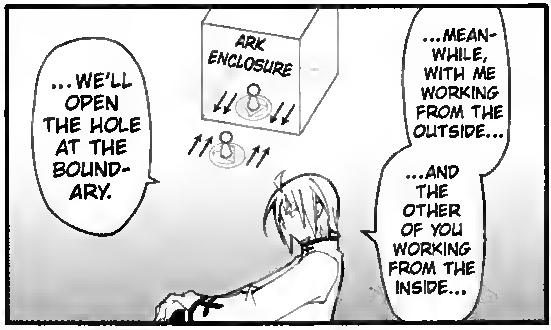

So long as you possess the Ark...
...Gungnir cannot hit you.

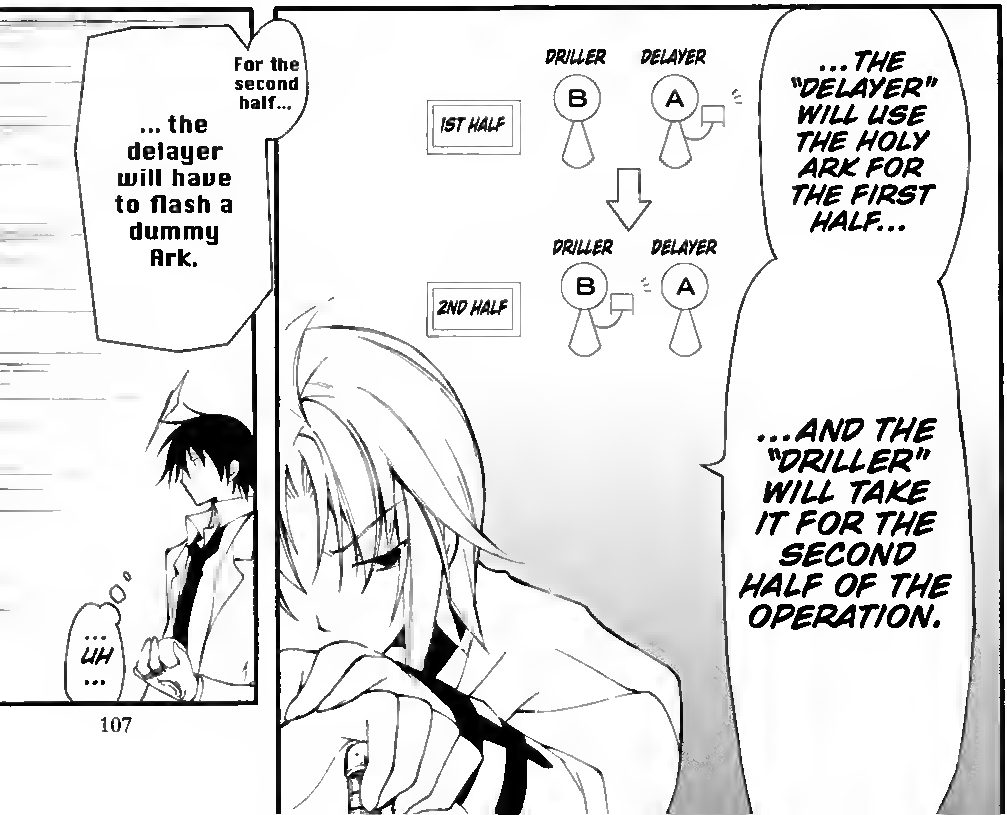

...IN ADDITION TO HAVING A GOOD MEMORY FOR SUCH USEFUL DETAILS, NICE GUY TSUZUKI-SAMA...
...And...
!!

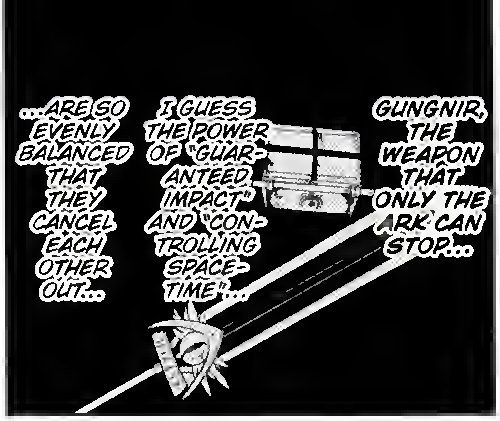
...THAT WILL NOT ONLY GET YOU OUT OF THAT PLACE...
...BUT ALSO HOLD OFF THE ENEMY.
A TWO-BIRDS-WITH-ONE-STONE PLAN...
Yup.
PLAN?
Right
Now hurry up and spit it out.
Yeah, yeah, you're super-scary.
Sure
... SCARES EVEN ME SOME-TIMES...
IT'S JUST... MAN! MY OVER-WHELM-ING INTELLI-GENCE...
I created this circle to link the inside to the outside.
It's the only point connect-ing the two.
Can you twits see me?
YUN (YWSW)
Here... ...where only commu-nication waves can travel right now.
ARK ENCLOSURE
ARK ENCLOSURE
CONNECTION POINT
We'll open a temporary hole big enough to let people through...

But...
...before that...
...one of you will need to delay the enemy and buy us some time.
If we're interrupted, it's all ouer, so put up a good fight.
SINCE WE HAVE THE ARK...
...GUNGNIR SHOULDN'T BE TOO MUCH TROUBLE.


WE NEED THE ARK TO OPEN THE HOLE TOO...
...SO...


...WE'LL OPEN THE HOLE AT THE BOUNDARY.
ARK ENCLOSURE
...MEANWHILE, WITH ME WORKING FROM THE OUTSIDE...
...AND THE OTHER OF YOU WORKING FROM THE INSIDE...


For the second half...
...the delayer will have to flash a dummy Ark.
...UH...
DRILLER
DELAYER
1ST HALF
B
A
DRILLER
DELAYER
2ND HALF
B
A
...THE "DELAYER" WILL USE THE HOLY ARK FOR THE FIRST HALF...
...AND THE "DRILLER" WILL TAKE IT FOR THE SECOND HALF OF THE OPERATION.


...ARE SO EVENLY BALANCED THAT THEY CANCEL EACH OTHER OUT...
I GUESS THE POWER OF "GUARANTEED IMPACT" AND "CONTROLLING SPACE-TIME"...
GUNGNIR, THE WEAPON THAT ONLY THE ARK CAN STOP...

I'VE GOTTA BE THE HOLE DRILLER. THAT'S MY ONLY HOPE.
HMM
SPELLS WON'T HELP ME AGAINST THE SPEAR.

EH?
We'll do roshambo to decide who does what. Loser is the delayer.
Okay!
Rock, paper ...
SCISSORS!

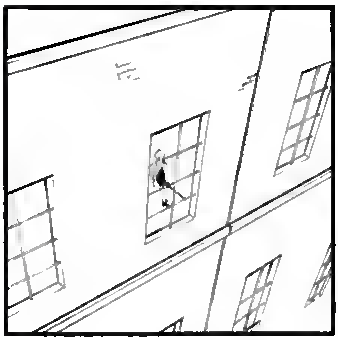
THAT MAKES THINGS PRETTY DANGEROUS FOR THE DELAYER IN THE SECOND HALF.
WHOEVER IT IS WON'T BE ABLE TO STOP GUNGNIR'S ATTACKS.

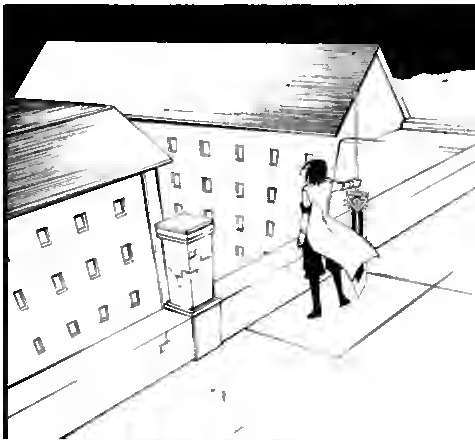
.....!!!

...DON'T MIND SWITCHING ROLES...
...I... IF YOU CARE THAT MUCH...
NOOOOO
SAY IT AIN'T SO!!!
...YOU'RE MAKING SUCH A FUSS OVER THIS.
I MEAN, YOU SEEM FASTER AT DOING THOSE DIMENSIONAL WARP THINGS ANYWAY.
HUH ...?
OKAY, MISTER PURE-BLOOD.
OUR ROLES ARE DE-CIDED.
MIGHT AS WELL HAVE YOU OWING ME A FAVOR RIGHT OFF THE BAT.
BE-SIDES ...
...ONCE WE'RE FINISHED HERE, WE'RE FREE AGENTS.
OH, AND HINATA ...?
TSUKI-MIYA!
HEY ...!
I KNOW. I KNOW.
... the first thing you do had better be to give us the antidote for this poison.
Once we get out of this safely ...

YOU...
...HAVE BLOOD ON YOUR LIPS.

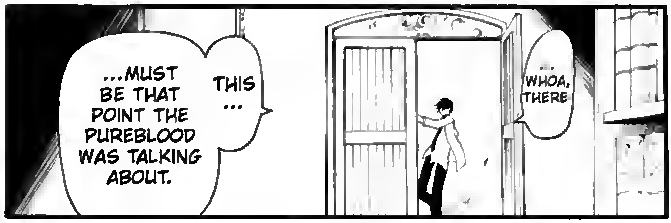
...COMING BACK TO GET ME.
...BE QUICK ...
AFTER I'VE PASSED OFF THE ARK AND YOU'VE OPENED THE HOLE...
PERO CLICK
10
3

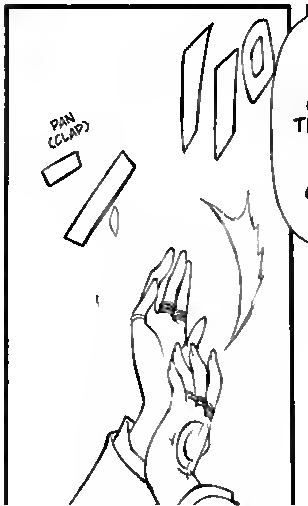




FOUND YOU.
GA
GA
GA
GA
GA
GA
CRUNCH
MY LORD ...
...I GIVE THEE THANKS.
DOGA (SLAM)

...GRANTING ME THIS CHANCE TO CORRECT MY FAILINGS.
FOR...

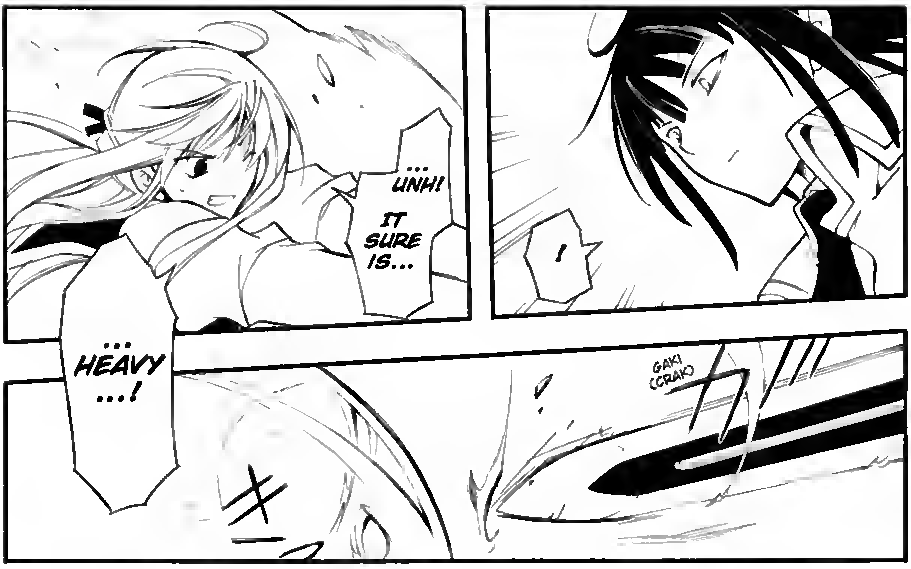

...MUST BE THAT POINT THE PUREBLOOD WAS TALKING ABOUT.
THIS ...
...WHOA, THERE


PAN (CLAP)

I'VE GOTTA CONNECT THIS PLACE TO THE CIRCLE OUTSIDE.
FIRST THINGS FIRST.
BA (FWIP)

SO, PURE-BLOOD...
...WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO NEXT?
GO, GUNGNIR !!
DOO (THOOM)
AL-READY !?
SHE'S GOT A SHORT FUSE!

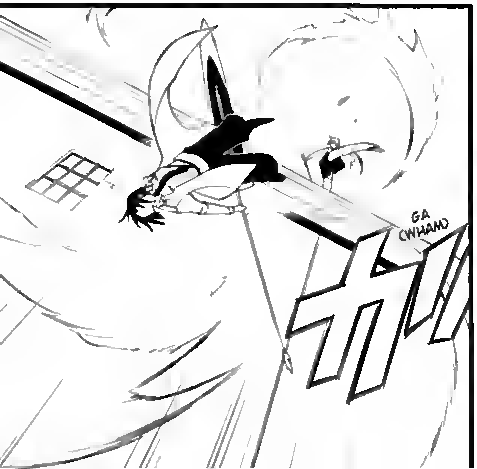
GO (FWOOSH)


...UNH!
IT SURE IS...
...HEAVY...!
!
GAKI (CRAK)

GA (KRINCH)
GA
GA
GA
GA

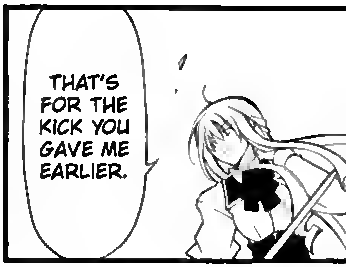
...MAN!
MY HAND'S NUMB!

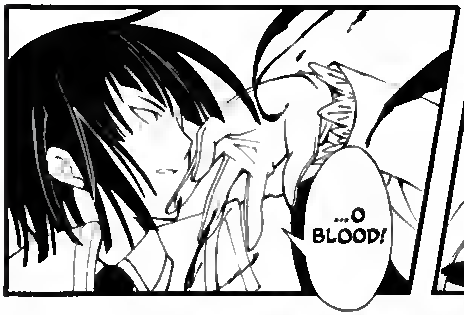
CHANGE TO LONG-SWORD FORM...
ZUZU (ZWWM)
THE ENEMY... SEEMS TO HAVE REALIZED THE ARK'S ABILITY TO REPEL GUNGNIR.


GA (WAAH)

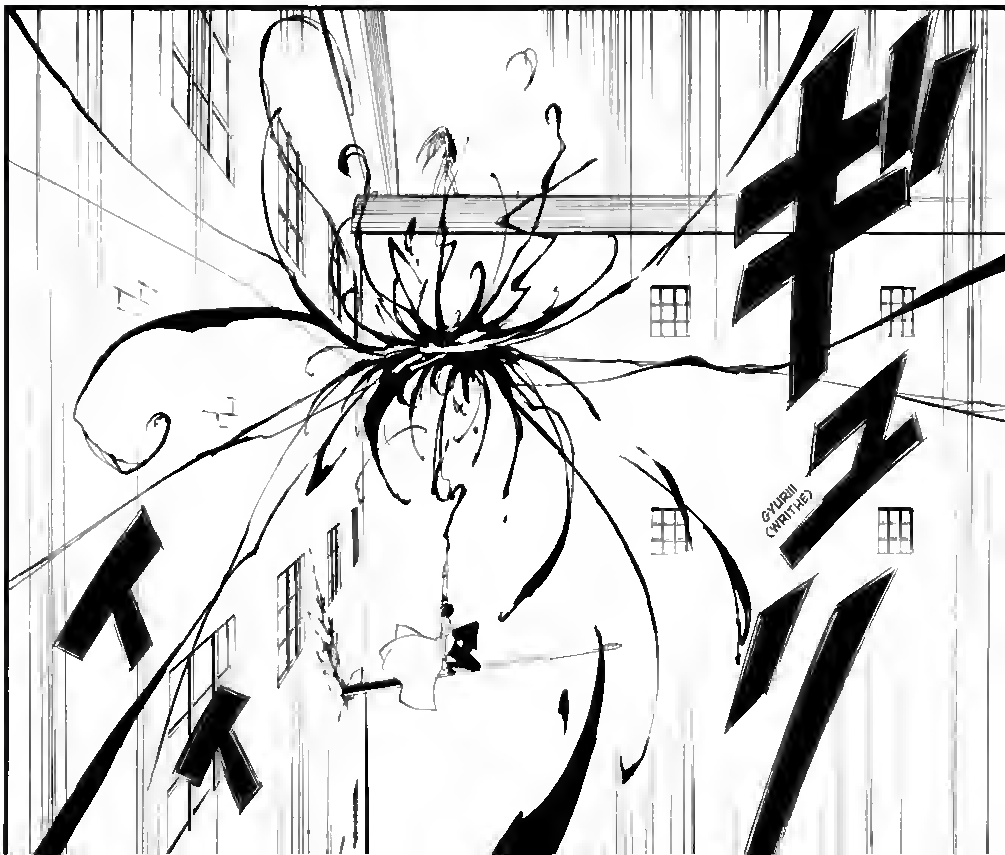
GAGA (KRRK)
NH!

I HAVE TO STAY OUT OF RANGE OF HER WEAPON.
BEST TO AVOID CLOSE COMBAT.


THAT'S FOR THE KICK YOU GAVE ME EARLIER.


...O BLOOD!

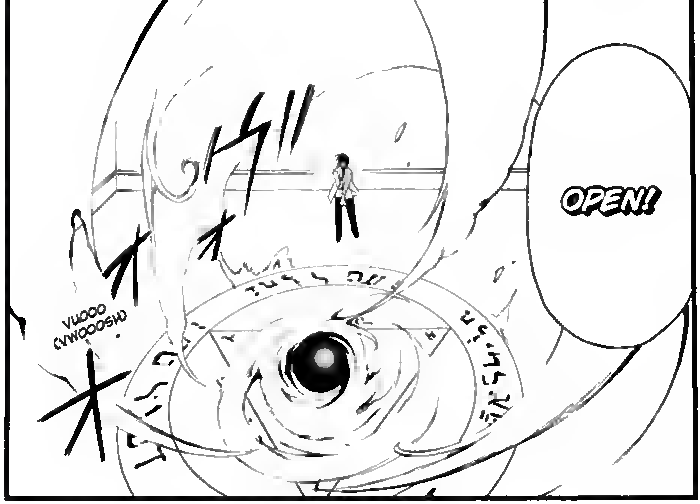
O BLOOD!

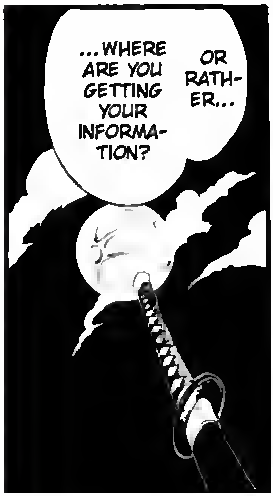

GYURI!! (WRITHE)

...I CAME TO GET THE ARK FROM YOU.
Tsuki-miya...
ピピピ
PIPI (BEEP)
!
...AL-READY?
The Circle's been activated.
Sorry, but I can't wait either.
I HAVEN'T CONTAINED GUNGNIR YET...
IT'S TOO SOON.
—
...TCH.

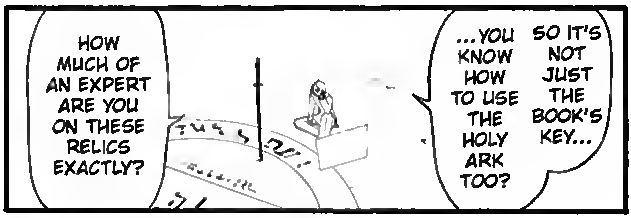
...HERE...
...THIS IS THE DUMMY ARK.
DON'T GET CAUGHT!
I'LL BE BACK WHEN IT'S READY.
...
I WON'T LAST VERY LONG AGAINST A DIVINE WEAPON.
YOU'D BETTER COME GET ME QUICK.
AH
WE HAVE TO CUT THE COMMUNICATION BECAUSE IT'LL INTERFERE WITH GETTING THE HOLE OPEN.
...OH, AND ANOTHER THING.
HUH!?
JUST LIKE THAT!?
LATER!

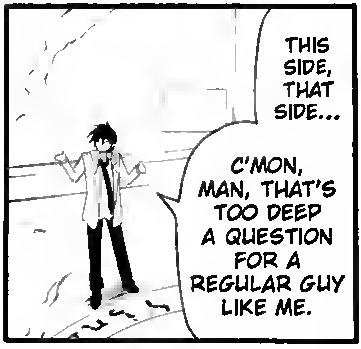
...I HEARD A LIE IN THERE.
GU (GRAB)
SERI-OUSLY ...
...CAN'T YOU EVER SHOW JUST A LITTLE SINCER-ITY?
IF YOU DID...
...YOU MIGHT BE A HALFWAY DECENT GUY.


OPEN!!
VUOOO (WHOOOSH)
REINFORCED SPELL FOR KILL.
OM


...WHERE ARE YOU GETTING YOUR INFORMATION?
OR RATHER...

It was a compliment. Be happy.
I'M GONNA GET SICK.
FEELS DIRTY TO HEAR THAT COMING FROM YOU.
You're good with your hands.
... Wow.

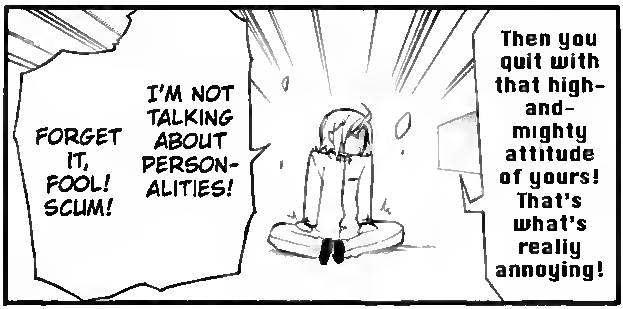

HOW MUCH OF AN EXPERT ARE YOU ON THESE RELICS EXACTLY?
...YOU KNOW HOW TO USE THE HOLY ARK TOO?
SO IT'S NOT JUST THE BOOK'S KEY...


THIS SIDE, THAT SIDE...
C'MON, MAN, THAT'S TOO DEEP A QUESTION FOR A REGULAR GUY LIKE ME.

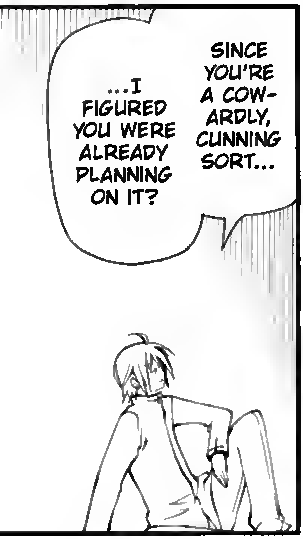
TELL ME...
...ARE YOU ON THAT SIDE OF THE CRUSADE?

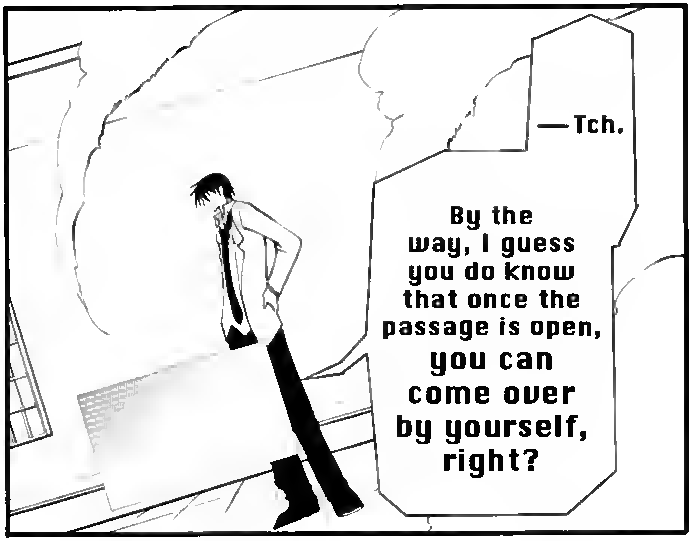
...

...DROP THE "I'M JUST A NOBODY" ACT? IT'S IRRITATING.
...COULD YOU AT LEAST...

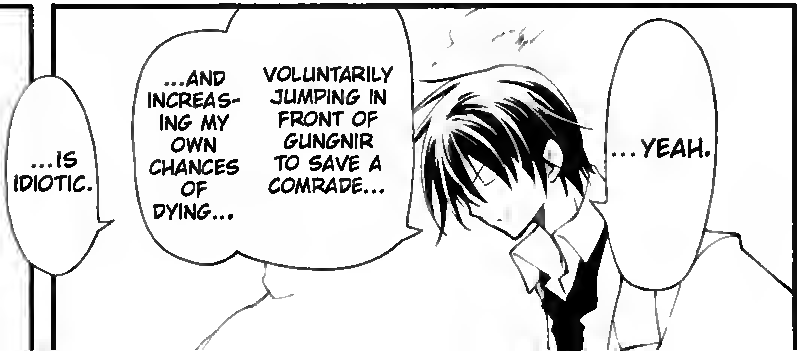

FORGET IT, FOOL! SCUM!
I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT PERSONALITIES!
Then you quit with that high-and-mighty attitude of yours! That's what's really annoying!

...
ARE YOU STUPID?


...I FIGURED YOU WERE ALREADY PLANNING ON IT?
SINCE YOU'RE A COWARDLY, CUNNING SORT...

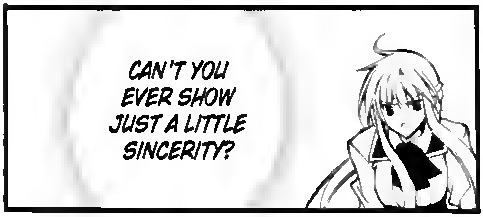

—Tch.
By the way, I guess you do know that once the passage is open, you can come over by yourself, right?

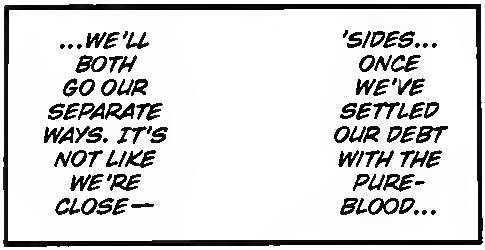
Exactly.

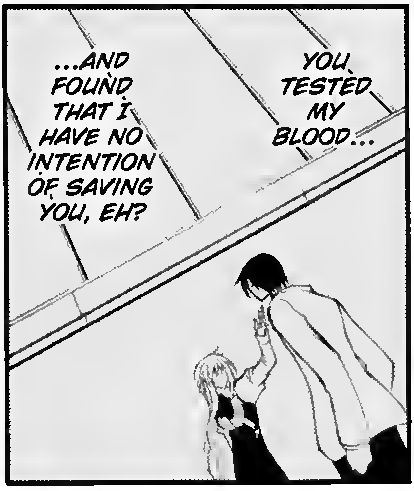

...IS IDIOTIC.
...AND INCREASING MY OWN CHANCES OF DYING...
VOLUNTARILY JUMPING IN FRONT OF GUNGNIR TO SAVE A COMRADE...
...YEAH.

WELL.
NOT THAT I CARE EITHER WAY.
AS LONG AS YOU BRING ME THE ARK.

For a lowly errand boy...
...desert-ing the delayer and exiting by yourself is the safest, most certain course.


CAN'T YOU EVER SHOW JUST A LITTLE SINCERITY?

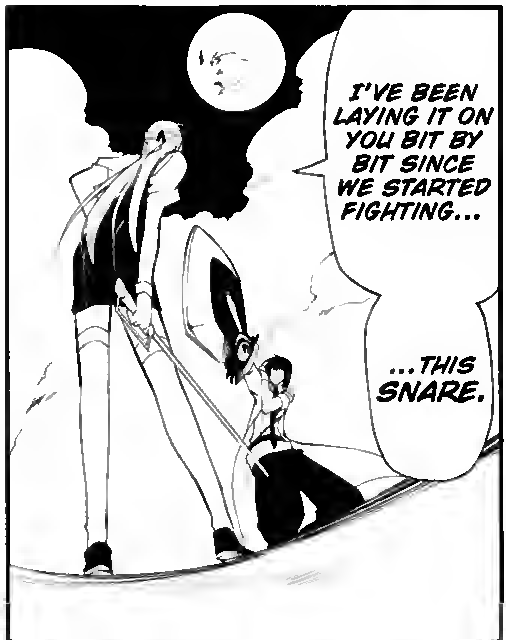

...WE'LL BOTH GO OUR SEPARATE WAYS. IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE CLOSE—
'SIDES... ONCE WE'VE SETTLED OUR DEBT WITH THE PURE-BLOOD...


...AND FOUND THAT I HAVE NO INTENTION OF SAVING YOU, EH?
YOU TESTED MY BLOOD...

ARE YOU AN IDIOT?
SO WHY ARE YOU WAITING FOR ME?
...YOU KNOW I LIED TO YOU.

...IT'S GETTING TOUGH.
HEF!
HEF!
ZA (SKFF)
DOO (BOOM)
I'M TRYING TO KEEP MY DISTANCE, SO MY OPPONENT HASN'T TAKEN MUCH DAMAGE.
ALL YOU DO IS RUN...
...HMM?
THE ONE THING ON MY MIND...
...IS THE KNOWLEDGE THAT IT'S ALL OVER IF SHE USES GUNGNIR AGAINST ME.
OH, YEAH?
YES.
NOT...
...THAT IT TROUBLES ME, SO LONG AS I GET THE HOLY ARK.
IT'S OVER—

PIIN (TINGLE)
GISHI (TIGHT)
キ!


I'VE BEEN LAYING IT ON YOU BIT BY BIT SINCE WE STARTED FIGHTING...
...THIS SNARE.

GI (KRIK)
...!?
I CAN'T MOVE!?

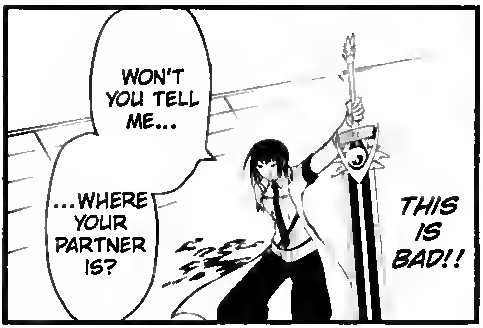
I'M GLAD IT FINALLY STARTED WORKING.
... PHEW.

...I'LL EVEN...
...TOSS IN THIS HOLY ARK.
GISHI GSHIN
...UNH!
LET'S MAKE A DEAL.
IF YOU AGREE TO MY TERMS, I'LL UNDO THOSE BINDINGS.
AND IF YOU'D LIKE...
THAT'S HOW I'LL BUY MORE TIME.
SHE'S GOT TO WANT THE ARK— IT'S HER WEAPON'S ACHILLES' HEEL.
...YOU HAVE THE POWER TO TELL IF I'M LYING, DON'T YOU?
IF YOU'RE A VAM-PIRE...
I AM.
...
YOU'RE WILLING TO GIVE ME THAT?

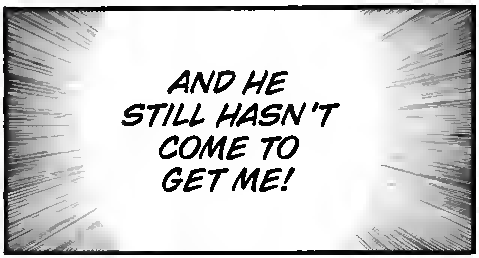
HINATA HASN'T SHOWN UP YET...
... WELL ...
I'M DONE FOR IF SHE FIGURES OUT MY ARK'S A DUMMY.
CAN'T YOU HURRY?
...I THINK BEFORE I HEAR ANY MORE OF YOUR TERMS...
GU
GUGU (STRAIN)
...I'D LIKE TO TEST WHETHER THAT IS THE REAL ARK OR NOT...
...BY PITTING IT AGAINST GUNGNIR.
THINGS JUST WENT FROM BAD TO WORSE...
...!
...NO DEAL.
BESIDES, YOU CAN'T EVEN MOVE RIGHT NOW—
MEKI (RRRIP)
MEKI
MEKI
126

WIRE-LIKE STRANDS OF BLOOD SO FINE THEY'RE...
PARA (SPLATTER)
PARA
DOSU (THD)
...INVISIBLE, HUH.
HOWEVER...
...I CAN DISCERN THAT THE ARK YOU HOLD IS NOT THE REAL HOLY ARK.
WHAT'S MORE...
DORO (SPLATCH)
...I DON'T HAVE THE POWER TO SNIFF OUT LIES IN A PERSON'S WORDS.
OH, AND FOR THE RECORD...

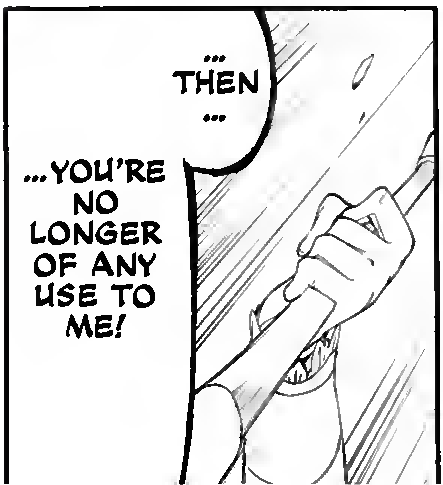
...SHOOT!


WON'T YOU TELL ME...
...WHERE YOUR PARTNER IS?
THIS IS BAD!!

IT'S OVER. END OF THE ROAD.
JIRI (TENSE)

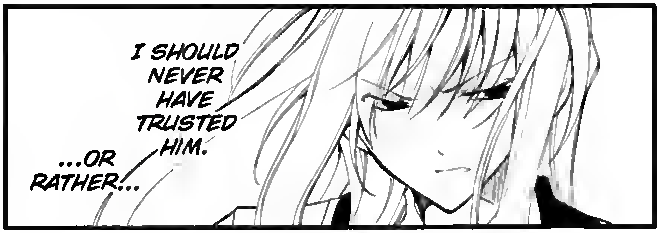

AND HE STILL HASN'T COME TO GET ME!

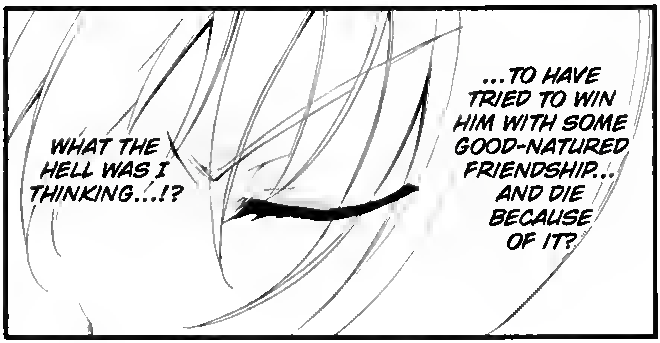
...I KNOW THAT YOU AND THAT OTHER ONE WHO'S SLIPPED AWAY...
...ARE PLOTTING SOMETHING.


...
THEN
...
...YOU'RE NO LONGER OF ANY USE TO ME!

...
THAT LYING PIECE OF SHIT? HOW WOULD I KNOW?
I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE HE IS!

ONCE GUNGNIR IS LAUNCHED, YOU'RE FINISHED.
NONE CAN ESCAPE IT, AND IT NEVER MISSES.





4-TURN...
...STRAIGHT INTO A HIGH-SPEED TRANS-FER...
...OUT OF HERE!!!
FU (FWSH)
!!
DOGAGA (FWOOSH)
ZAA (SWOOSH)
FLOOR TRANSFER
COM-MENCE!

ZAA (SWOOSH)
FLOOR TRANSFER
COM-MENCE!

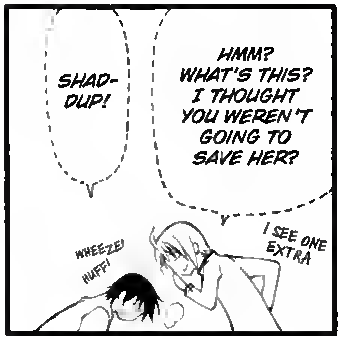
U-TURN...
...STRAIGHT INTO A HIGH-SPEED TRANS-FER...
...OUT OF HERE!!!
FU (FWSH)
!!
DOGAGA (PHCOM)

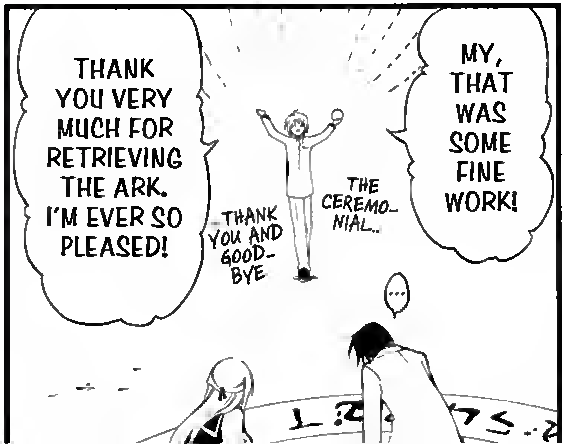
... HAAH.
BE'TAN (SMACK)

HEY...
TSUKI —
MANY THANKS!!

HFF ...

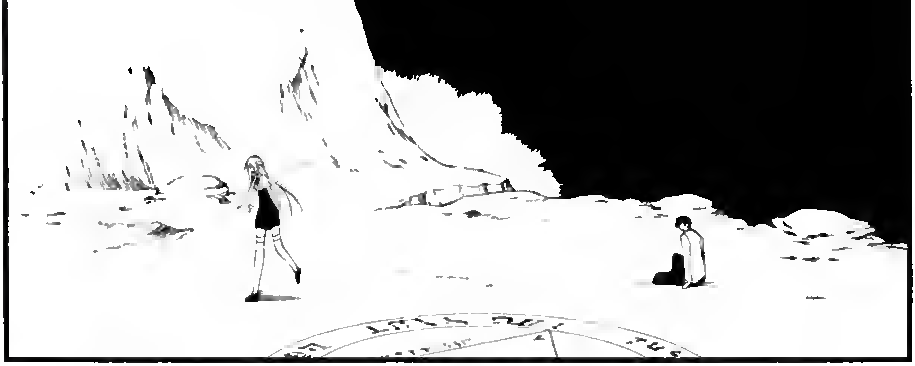
MADE IT...
...IN THE NICK OF TIME ...!
WHEEZE! HAFF!

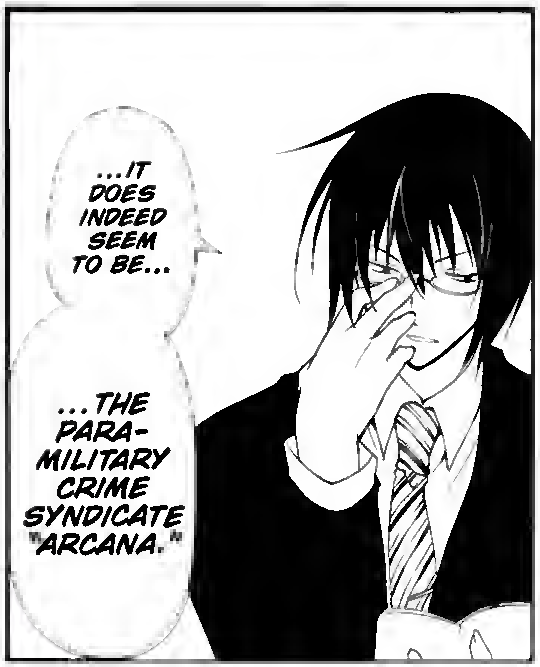

SHAD- DUP!
HMM? WHAT'S THIS? I THOUGHT YOU WEREN'T GOING TO SAVE HER?
WHEEZE! HAFF!
I SEE ONE EXTRA

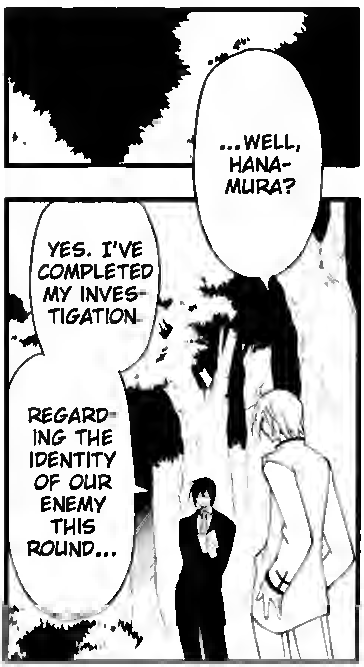

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR RETRIEVING THE ARK. I'M EVER SO PLEASED!
THANK YOU AND GOOD- BYE
THE CEREMO- NIAL..
MY, THAT WAS SOME FINE WORK!
...

...
...WHAT POISON DID YOU GIVE US?
BETTER TAKE IT QUICK, OR YOU'LL BE IN A WORLD OF HURT.
SO WHAT WAS THE POISON?
THE PROMISED ANTIDOTE.
SUPER! ANTI-DIARRHEAL
STOP!
HERE.
NEVER MIND.
POI (TOSS)
GOOD-BYE.
ZA (SHFF)
TSUKI-MIYA?
...WE'VE REPAID OUR DEBT.
WE'RE ALL FINISHED HERE, AREN'T WE?
...I HAD THOUGHT I MIGHT ASK YOU TO TEAM WITH ME A LITTLE WHILE LONGER.
...IF YOU HAD COME FOR ME...
HINA-TA...

BUT I CHANGED MY MIND.
I'VE REALIZED THAT IT'S ALL STUPID.
...I DID COME FOR YOU.
... BUT ...
...
...I MEAN ...
...SURE, I WAS LATE, BUT...



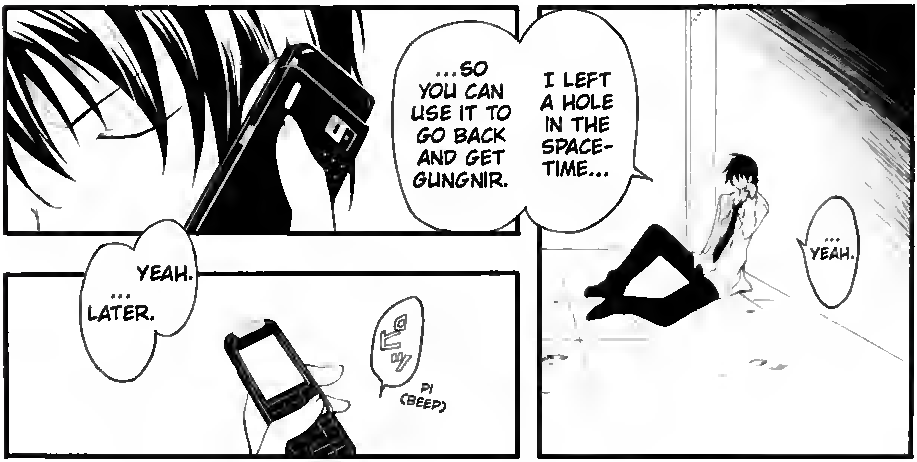

...IT DOES INDEED SEEM TO BE...
...THE PARA-MILITARY CRIME SYNDICATE "ARCANA."

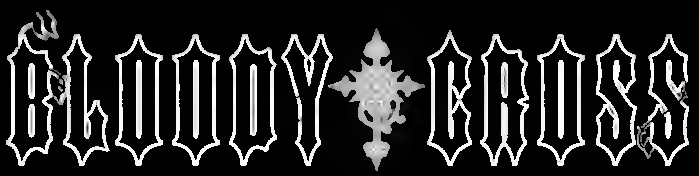

...WELL, HANA-MURA?
YES. I'VE COMPLETED MY INVES-TIGATION.
REGARD-ING THE IDENTITY OF OUR ENEMY THIS ROUND...

!
...THAT HALF-BREED HINATA?
THERE IS EVIDENCE HE HAS LINKS TO ARCANA.

OH, AND...

SO HE IS A PLAYER IN THE CRUSADE!
...HMPH.


I LEFT A HOLE IN THE SPACE-TIME...
...YEAH.
...SO YOU CAN USE IT TO GO BACK AND GET GUNGNIR.
...YEAH. ...LATER.
PI (BEEP)

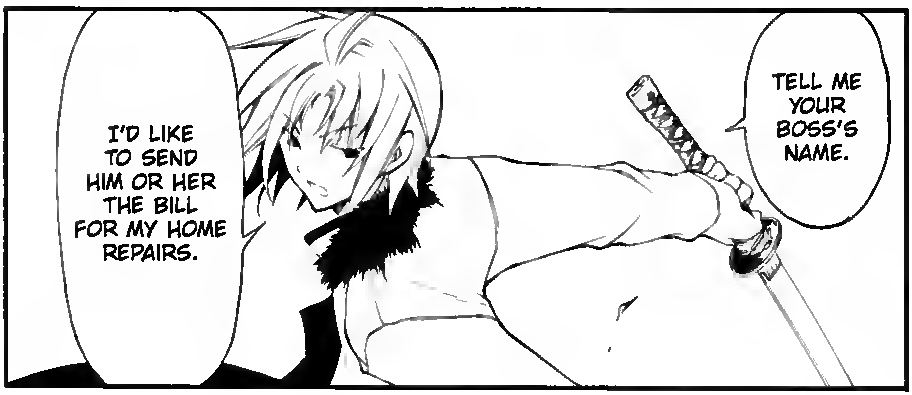

BLOODY CROSS

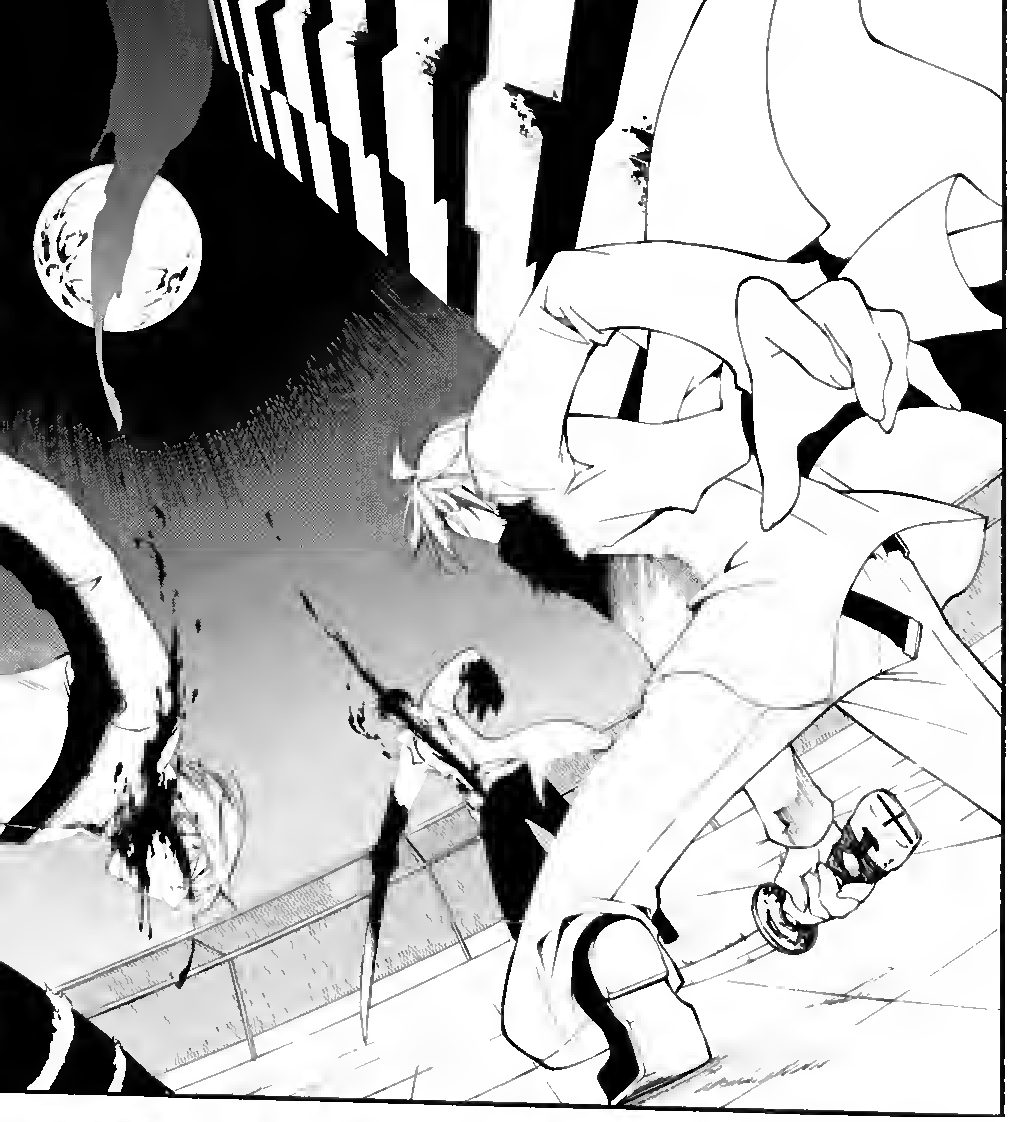
BLOODY CROSS

ON WHOSE ORDERS ARE YOU ATTACKING, DEMONS?
FOR MINIONS GIVEN THE TASK OF STEALING GOD'S RELICS...
...YOU'RE A PRETTY SAD, PATHETIC BUNCH.
WELL, I SUPPOSE THAT CAN'T BE HELPED.

GIVEN THAT YOU'RE UP AGAINST...
...THE ALL-KNOWING, ALL-POWERFUL GOD CANDIDATE, TSUZUKI-SAMA.

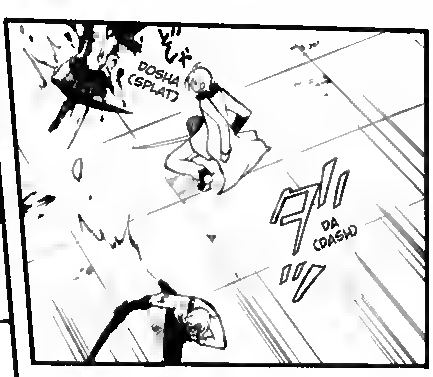
TCH!
ZA (SHIFT)


TELL ME YOUR BOSS'S NAME.
I'D LIKE TO SEND HIM OR HER THE BILL FOR MY HOME REPAIRS.



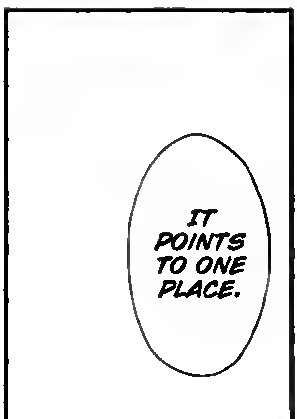
HFF!
HFF!

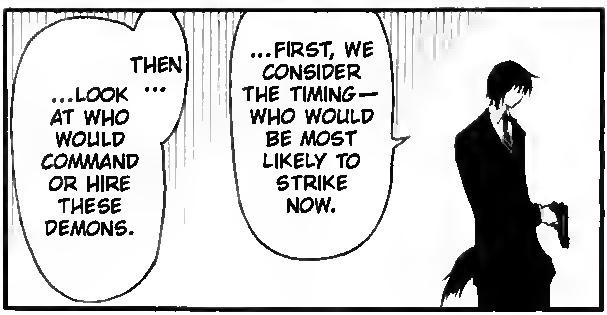
NGH.
THAT HIT TO THE NECK DIDN'T KILL HIM


DOSHA (SPLAT)
DA (DASH)

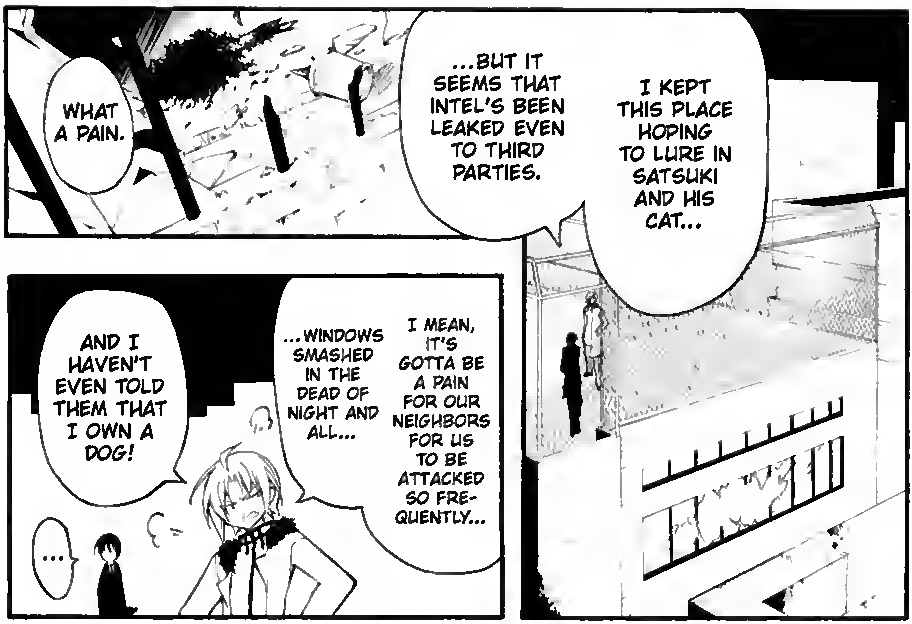
ハロー
SASUN GELAND
HFH!

NO NEED TO ASK SCUM LIKE THIS.
I'LL SNIFF OUT THE INFORMATION FOR YOU.
DOSHA GELAT!


IT POINTS TO ONE PLACE.

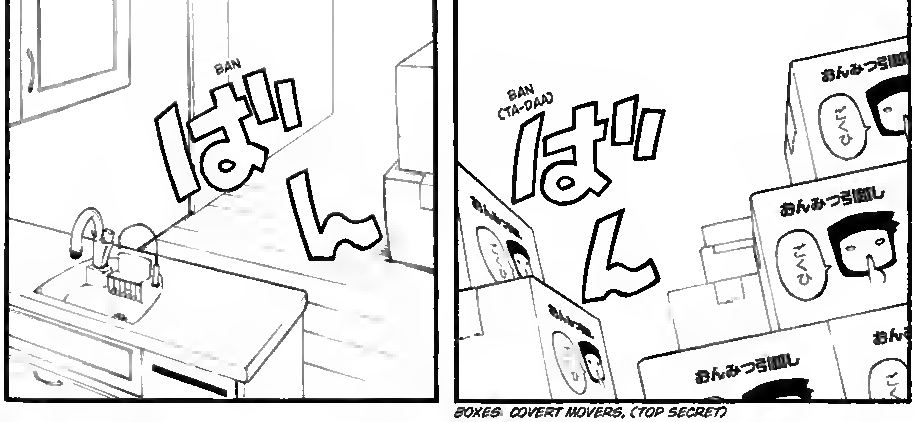

...FIRST, WE CONSIDER THE TIMING— WHO WOULD BE MOST LIKELY TO STRIKE NOW.
THEN ...
...LOOK AT WHO WOULD COMMAND OR HIRE THESE DEMONS.

I BELIEVE THEY'RE UNDER THE EMPLOY OF THE PARAMILITARY CRIME SYNDICATE ARCANA.
...
HMPH.

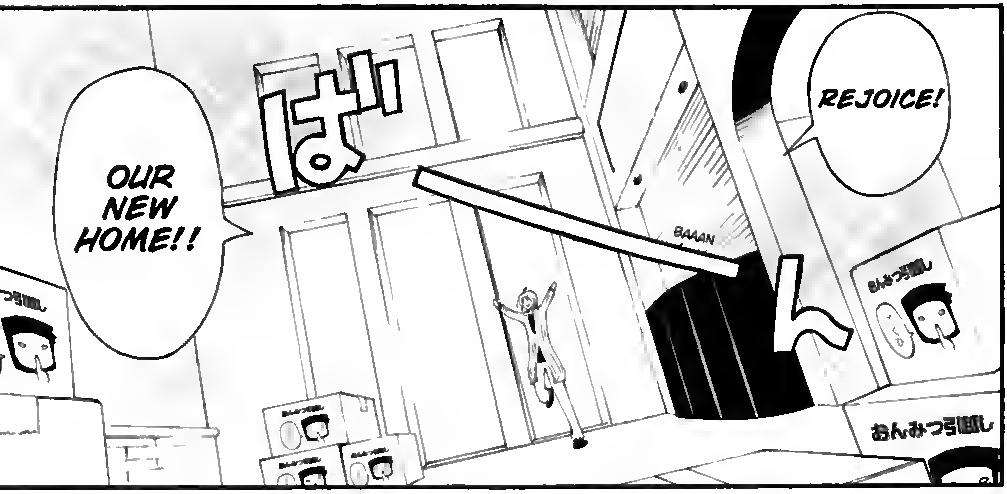

I KEPT THIS PLACE HOPING TO LURE IN SATSUKI AND HIS CAT...
...BUT IT SEEMS THAT INTEL'S BEEN LEAKED EVEN TO THIRD PARTIES.
WHAT A PAIN.
I MEAN, IT'S GOTTA BE A PAIN FOR OUR NEIGHBORS FOR US TO BE ATTACKED SO FREQUENTLY...
...WINDOWS SMASHED IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT AND ALL...
AND I HAVEN'T EVEN TOLD THEM THAT I OWN A DOG!
...

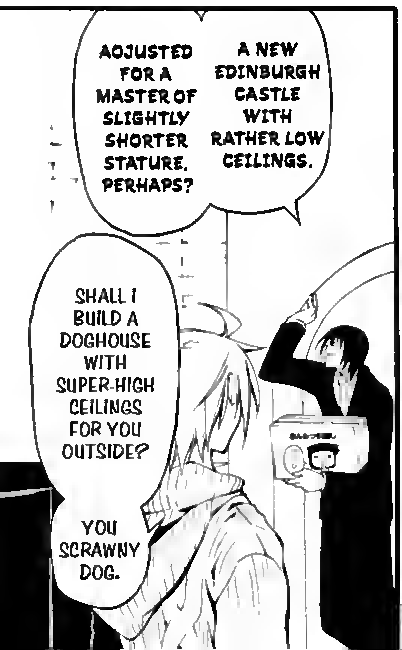
.....
...I GUESS IT'S HIGH TIME.

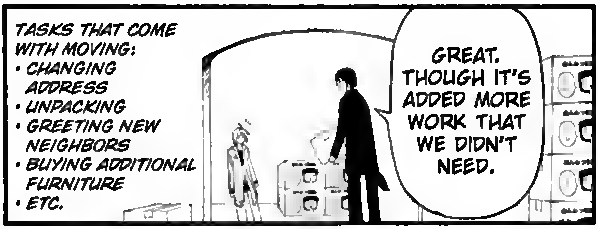
Chapter 7
The Second Relic

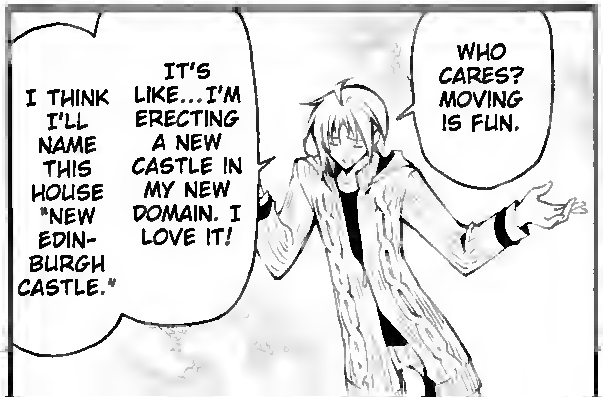


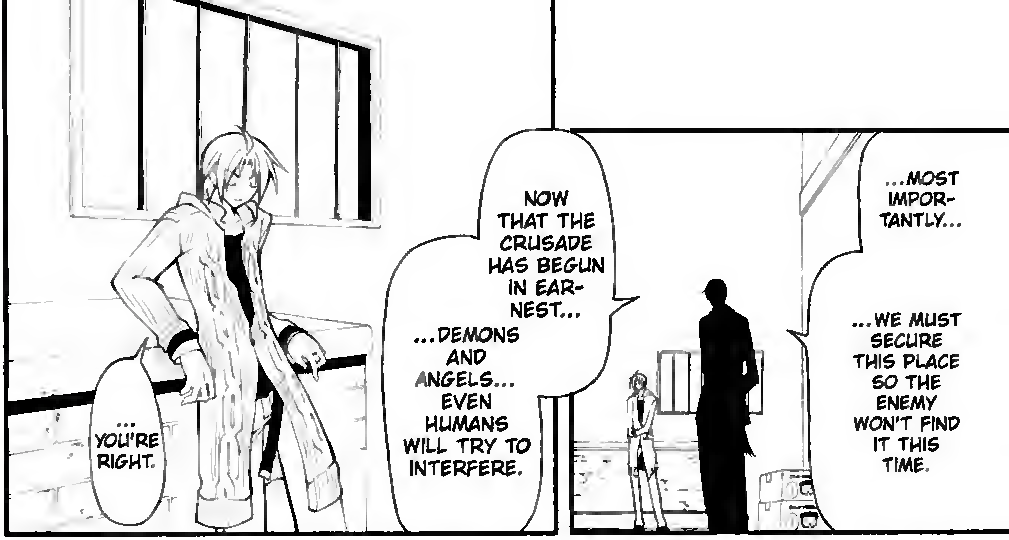
BOXES. COVERT MOVERS. (TOP SECRET)



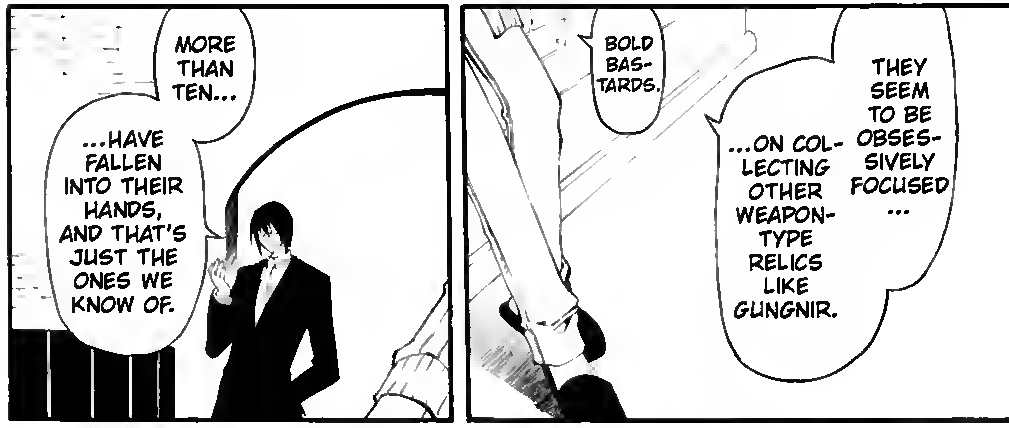

ADJUSTED FOR A MASTER OF SLIGHTLY SHORTER STATURE. PERHAPS?
A NEW EDINBURGH CASTLE WITH RATHER LOW CEILINGS.
SHALL I BUILD A DOGHOUSE WITH SUPER-HIGH CEILINGS FOR YOU OUTSIDE?
YOU SCRAWNY DOG.


TASKS THAT COME WITH MOVING:
• CHANGING ADDRESS
• UNPACKING
• GREETING NEW NEIGHBORS
• BUYING ADDITIONAL FURNITURE
• ETC.
GREAT. THOUGH IT'S ADDED MORE WORK THAT WE DIDN'T NEED.


I THINK I'LL NAME THIS HOUSE "NEW EDIN-BURGH CASTLE."
IT'S LIKE... I'M ERECTING A NEW CASTLE IN MY NEW DOMAIN. I LOVE IT!
WHO CARES? MOVING IS FUN.

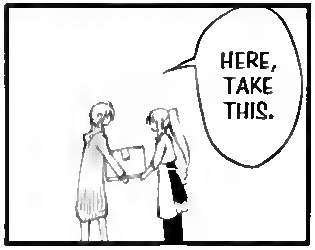

...YOU'RE RIGHT.
NOW THAT THE CRUSADE HAS BEGUN IN EARNEST...
...DEMONS AND ANGELS... EVEN HUMANS WILL TRY TO INTERFERE.
...MOST IMPORTANTLY...
...WE MUST SECURE THIS PLACE SO THE ENEMY WON'T FIND IT THIS TIME.

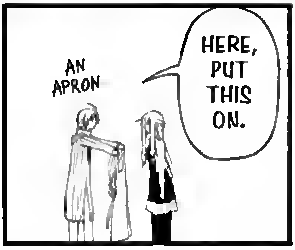
A PARTICULAR EYESORE LATELY HAS BEEN...
...ARCANA.

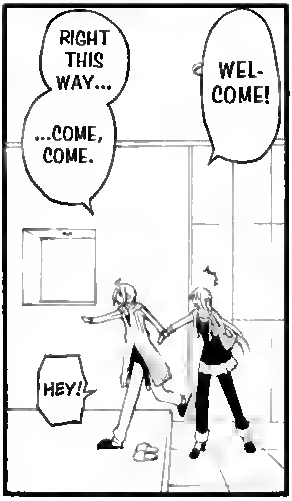

MORE THAN TEN...
...HAVE FALLEN INTO THEIR HANDS, AND THAT'S JUST THE ONES WE KNOW OF.
BOLD BASTARDS.
...ON COLLECTING OTHER WEAPON-TYPE RELICS LIKE GUNGNIR.
THEY SEEM TO BE OBSESSIVELY FOCUSED ...

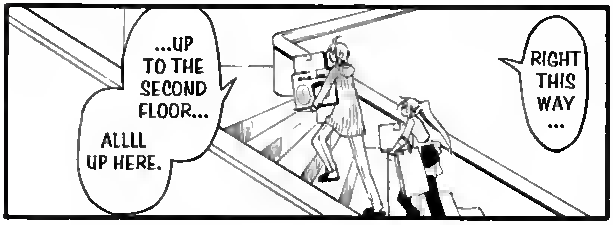
I SUSPECT...
...THEY, AS WELL AS SATSUKI, WILL JOIN THE FRAY FOR THE NEXT RELIC.
.....
BEFORE THAT...
...WE SHOULD PROBABLY TAKE CARE OF...
... THIS.
おんみつ回し
.....
WE'VE NO CHOICE.
...
...
... ...
THERE'S A WHOLE HOUSE'S WORTH
MISSION IMPOSSIBLE
I'D LIKE TO BE IN BED BY NIGHTFALL.
THE MOVERS DID HALF OF IT
WE DID DO A GOOD JOB OF PACKING
...BY OURSELVES?
UPGRADED MODEL
BA (FWP)
WE'LL JUST HAVE TO CALL...
...A MAID.

WELL?
WHAT'D YOU CALL ME FOR?

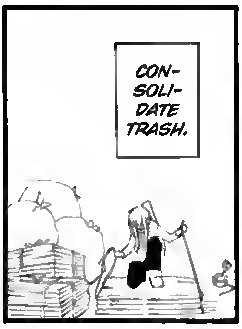

HERE, TAKE THIS.

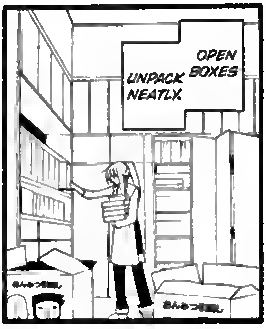

AN APRON
HERE, PUT THIS ON.


WEL-COME!
RIGHT THIS WAY...
...COME, COME.
HEY!


RIGHT THIS WAY ...
...UP TO THE SECOND FLOOR...
ALLLL UP HERE.

FIVE HOURS LATER ...
.....
WHEW.

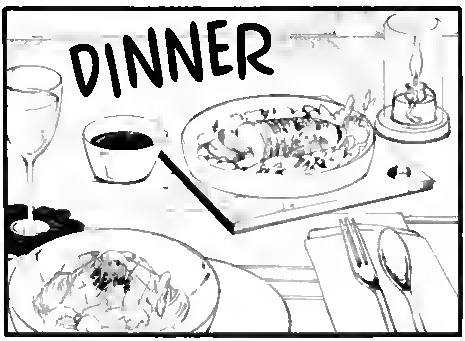

CON-SOLI-DATE TRASH.

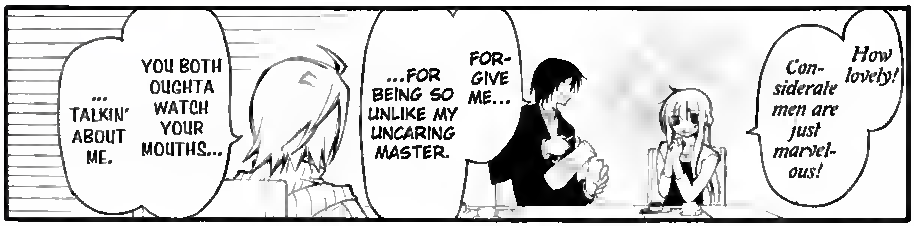

OPEN BOXES
UNPACK NEATLY.

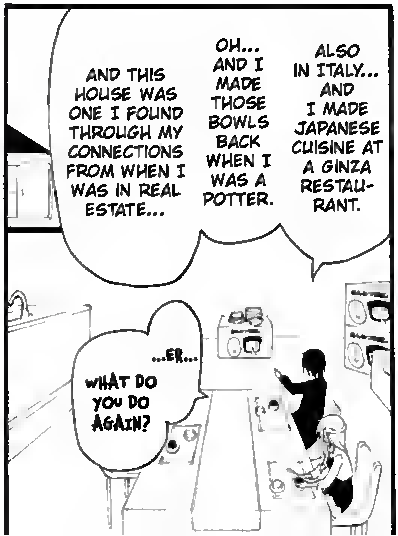
HOW DARE YOU MAKE SOMEONE WHO'S PRACTICALLY A STRANGER HELP YOU WITH YOUR MOVE!?
AWWW
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL, ICE QUEEN?
BASHI (THWAP)
HEY!! WAIT A SEC!!
I'M OUTTA HERE.
IT'S NOT AS IF I HAVE LOADS OF FREE TIME TO BE VOLUNTEERING...!
ぽふ
POFU (FWUMP)
OHP.
INCLUDING A DESSERT OF CHOCOLATE SOUFFLÉ AND GINGER TEA FOR THREE.
Choc-olate ...?
THAT GOT HER ATTENTION
ARE YOU LEAVING?
THE KITCHEN GOT UNPACKED QUICKLY, SO I PREPARED A SIMPLE SUPPER.
I'M SORRY
HOW CAN WE LET A GUEST GO HOME EMPTY-HANDED AFTER SHE'S MADE HERSELF USEFUL ALL DAY?
HEH

PLEASE.

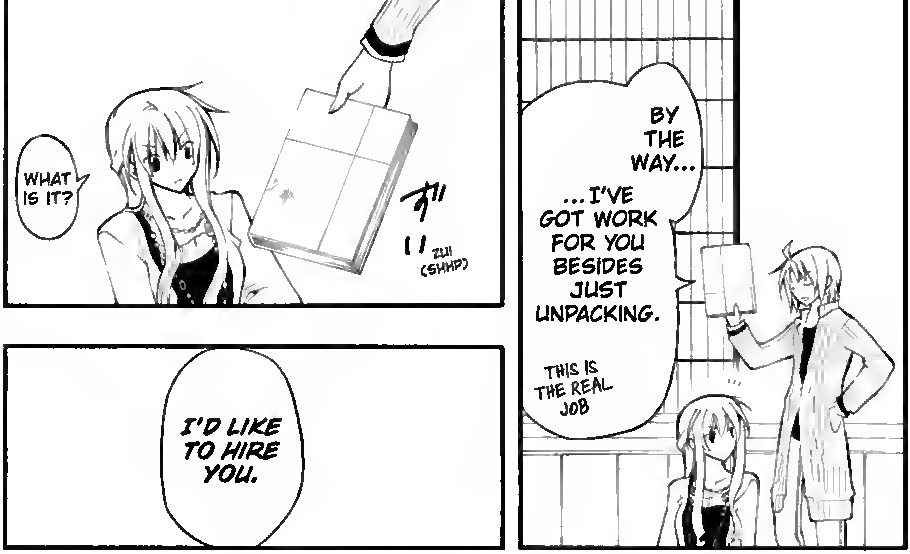
DESSERT

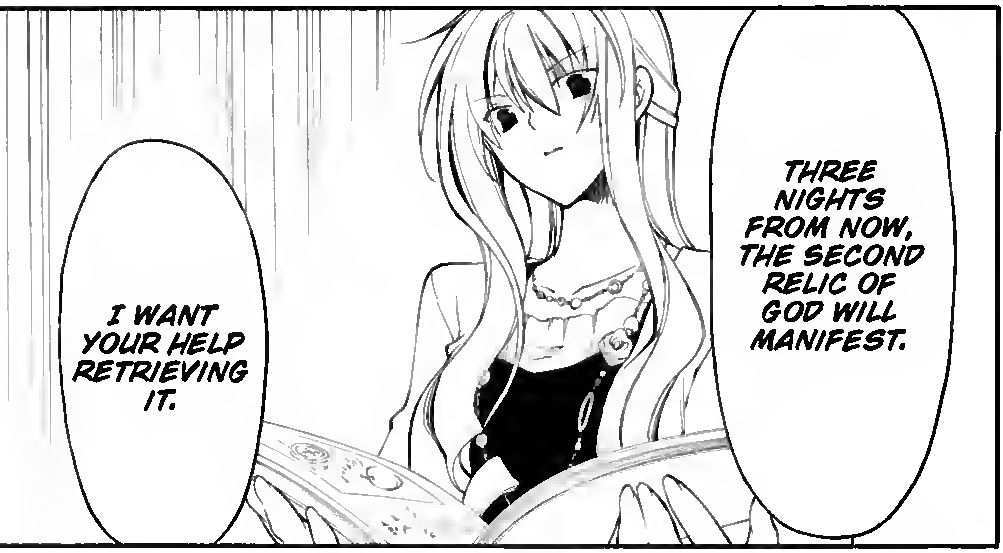

DINNER

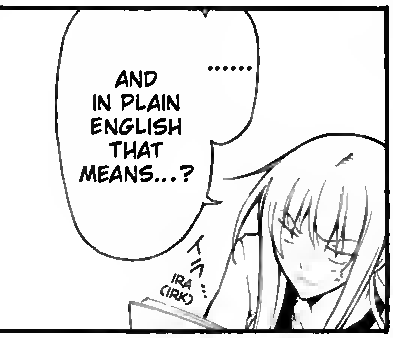

... TALKIN' ABOUT ME.
YOU BOTH OUGHTA WATCH YOUR MOUTHS...
...FOR BEING SO UNLIKE MY UNCARING MASTER.
FOR-GIVE ME...
Con-siderate men are just marvel-ous!
How lovely!

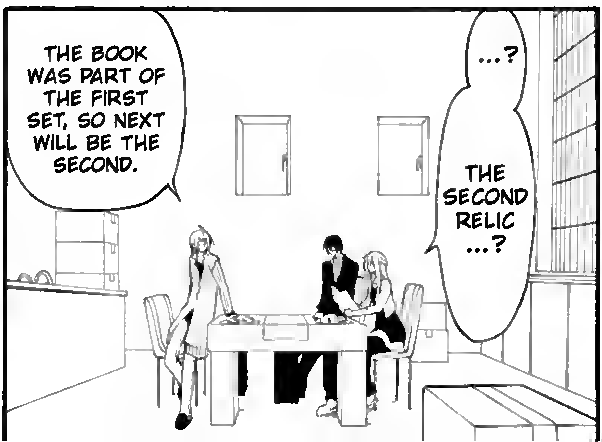

AND THIS HOUSE WAS ONE I FOUND THROUGH MY CONNECTIONS FROM WHEN I WAS IN REAL ESTATE...
OH... AND I MADE THOSE BOWLS BACK WHEN I WAS A POTTER.
ALSO IN ITALY... AND I MADE JAPANESE CUISINE AT A GINZA RESTAU-RANT.
...ER...
WHAT DO YOU DO AGAIN?

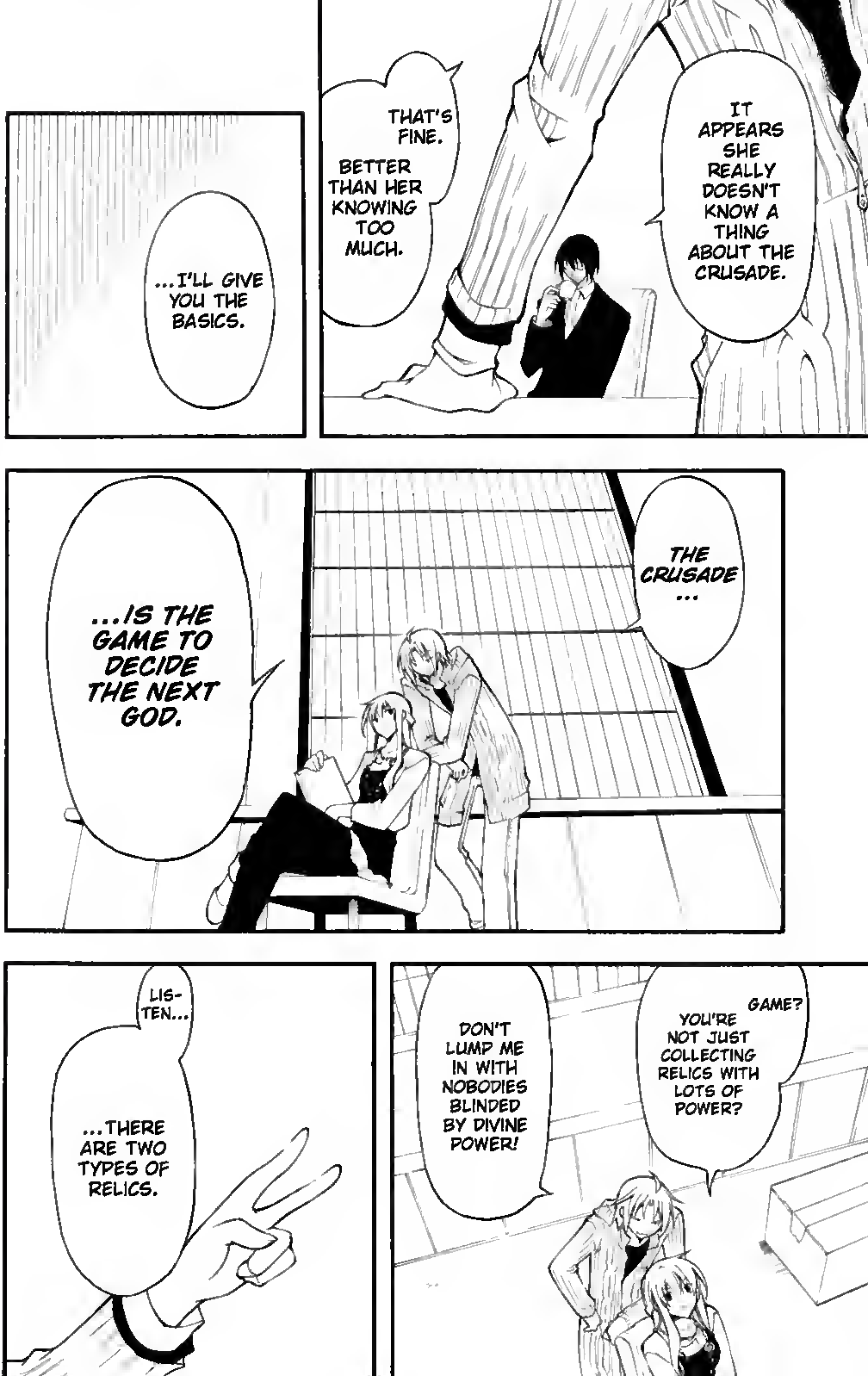
...A LONG TIME AGO, I WORKED IN THE KITCHEN OF A THREE-STAR HOTEL.
I ALSO HAD SOME TRAINING IN FRANCE.
...IT'S ALMOST TOO DELI-CIOUS...
SO GOOD, I'M SCARED IT'S POISONED
BUT HOW? YOU'RE A DOG
I MUST SAY...
MOGU (NIBBLE)


WHAT IS IT?
BY THE WAY...
...I'VE GOT WORK FOR YOU BESIDES JUST UNPACKING.
THIS IS THE REAL JOB
I'D LIKE TO HIRE YOU.


THREE NIGHTS FROM NOW, THE SECOND RELIC OF GOD WILL MANIFEST.
I WANT YOUR HELP RETRIEVING IT.

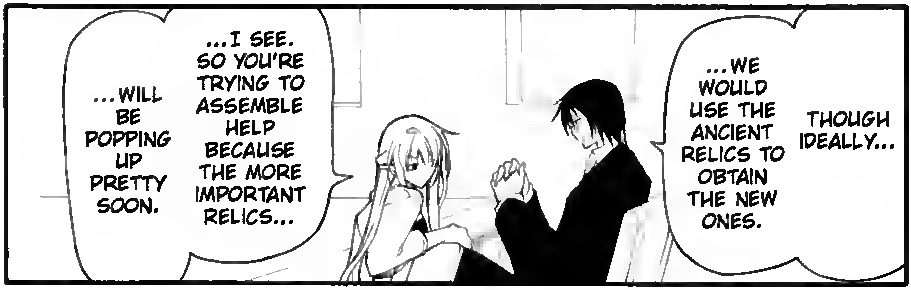

.....
AND IN PLAIN ENGLISH THAT MEANS...?
IRA (GIRK)


THE BOOK WAS PART OF THE FIRST SET, SO NEXT WILL BE THE SECOND.
...?
THE SECOND RELIC ...?

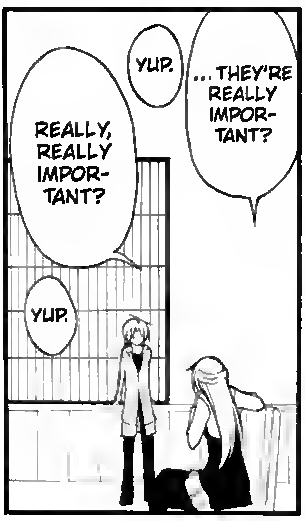

IT APPEARS SHE REALLY DOESN'T KNOW A THING ABOUT THE CRUSADE.
THAT'S FINE.
BETTER THAN HER KNOWING TOO MUCH.
...I'LL GIVE YOU THE BASICS.
THE CRUSADE ...
...IS THE GAME TO DECIDE THE NEXT GOD.
YOU'RE NOT JUST COLLECTING RELICS WITH LOTS OF POWER?
GAME?
DON'T LUMP ME IN WITH NOBODIES BLINDED BY DIVINE POWER!
LIS-TEN...
...THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF RELICS.

THE FIRST TYPE, WHICH INCLUDES THE HOLY ARK AND GUNGNIR...
...ARE RELICS THAT HAVE EXISTED FOR A LONG TIME, AND ARE SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.
AND THE SECOND TYPE...
...LIKE THE PROPH-ECY BOOK...
CRUSADE
...ARE THOSE RELICS THAT ARE NEWLY APPEAR-ING SPECIFI-CALLY FOR THIS CRUSADE.

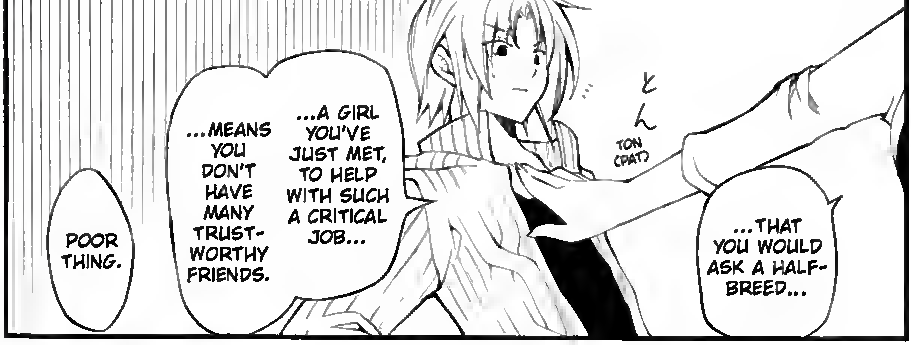
WHAT I MUST DO FOR THE CRUSADE I'M FIGHTING...
...IS COLLECT THE LATTER TYPE OF RELICS.


...I SEE. SO YOU'RE TRYING TO ASSEMBLE HELP BECAUSE THE MORE IMPORTANT RELICS...
...WILL BE POPPING UP PRETTY SOON.
...WE WOULD USE THE ANCIENT RELICS TO OBTAIN THE NEW ONES.
THOUGH IDEALLY...

NIKO (GRIN)

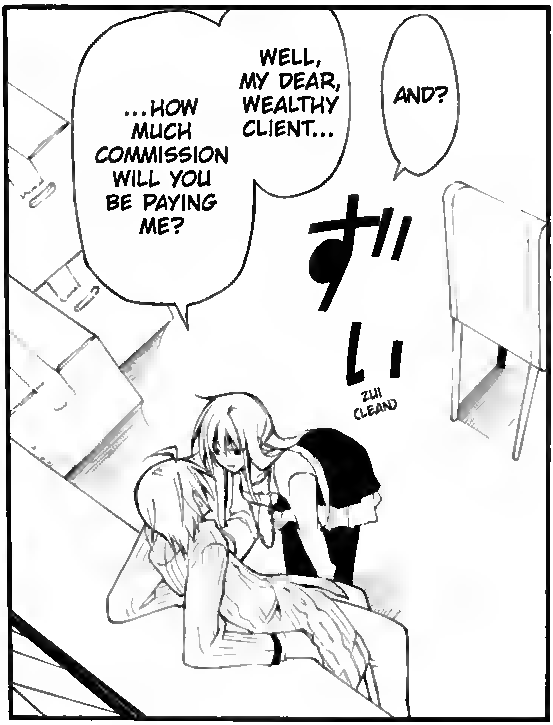

...THEY'RE REALLY IMPOR-TANT?
YUP.
REALLY, REALLY IMPOR-TANT?
YUP.

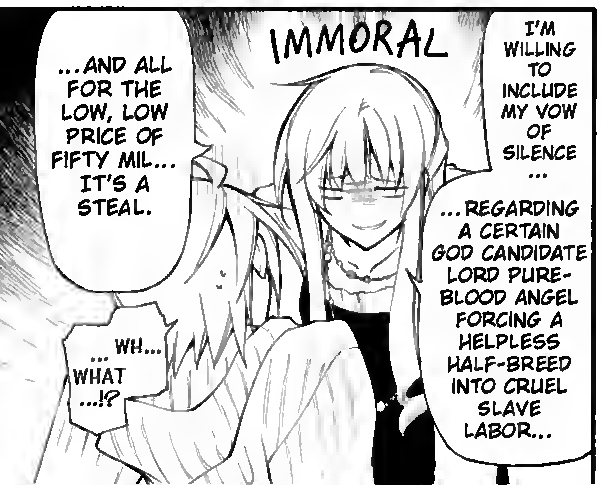
SUDDEN, STRONG BAD FEELING.
...

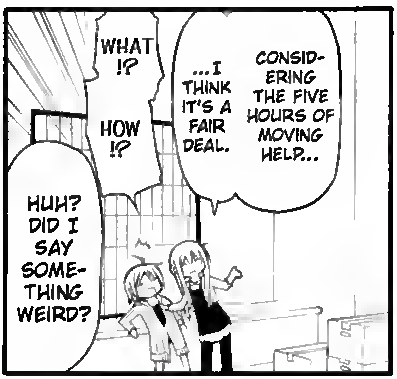

...THAT YOU WOULD ASK A HALF-BREED...
とん
TON (PAT)
...A GIRL YOU'VE JUST MET, TO HELP WITH SUCH A CRITICAL JOB...
...MEANS YOU DON'T HAVE MANY TRUST-WORTHY FRIENDS.
POOR THING.

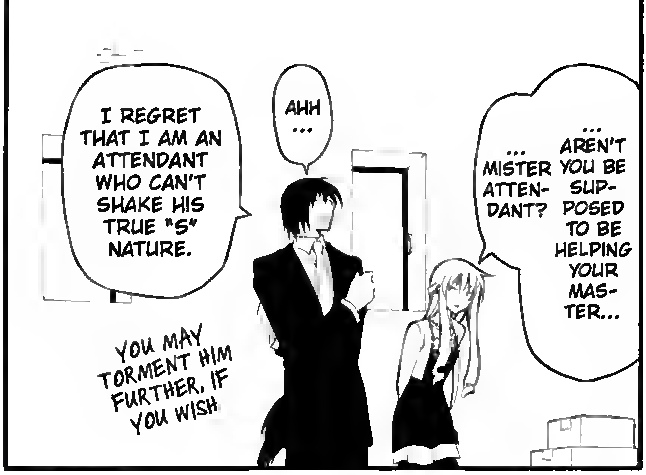
H...
...HOW'S TEN MILLION SOUND?

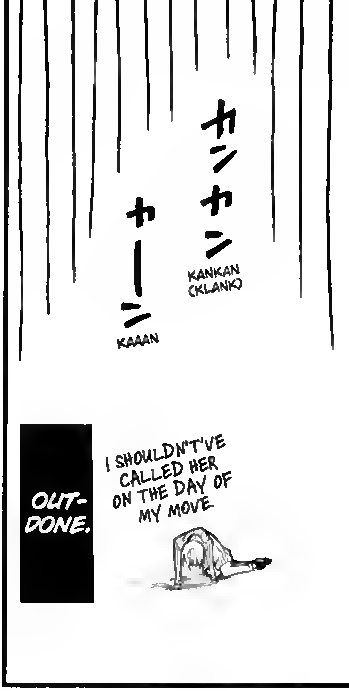
SURE.
FIFTY MIL.
IN CASH.


AND?
WELL, MY DEAR, WEALTHY CLIENT...
...HOW MUCH COMMISSION WILL YOU BE PAYING ME?
すりい
ZUI CLEAND


IMMORAL
I'M WILLING TO INCLUDE MY VOW OF SILENCE...
...REGARDING A CERTAIN GOD CANDIDATE LORD PURE-BLOOD ANGEL FORCING A HELPLESS HALF-BREED INTO CRUEL SLAVE LABOR...
...AND ALL FOR THE LOW, LOW PRICE OF FIFTY MIL... IT'S A STEAL.
... WH... WHAT ...!?

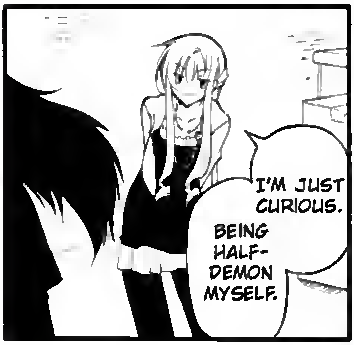

CONSID-ERING THE FIVE HOURS OF MOVING HELP...
...I THINK IT'S A FAIR DEAL.
WHAT !?
HOW !?
HUH? DID I SAY SOME-THING WEIRD?


I REGRET THAT I AM AN ATTENDANT WHO CAN'T SHAKE HIS TRUE "S" NATURE.
AHH...
...MISTER ATTENDANT?
...AREN'T YOU BE SUPPOSED TO BE HELPING YOUR MASTER...
YOU MAY TORMENT HIM FURTHER, IF YOU WISH


カンカン
KANKAN (CLANK)
カーン
KAAAN
OUT-DONE.
I SHOULDN'T'VE CALLED HER ON THE DAY OF MY MOVE

...
...THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN WANTING TO ASK YOU.
THAT REMINDS ME...

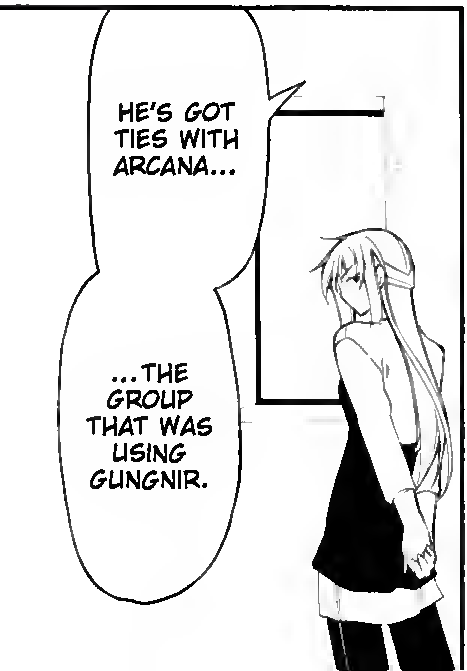
YOU DISAP-PROVE?


I'M JUST CURIOUS.
BEING HALF-DEMON MYSELF.

HOW IS IT THAT YOU, A DEMON...
...ARE A PURE-BLOOD ANGEL'S ATTEN-DANT?

"ATTENDANT" IS AN OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED TITLE...
...GIVEN TO DEMONS WHO SIDE WITH ANGELS, FOR ONE THING...
IT'S SIMILAR TO FALLEN ANGELS WHO SERVE DEMONS IN TERMS OF "BETRAYAL."

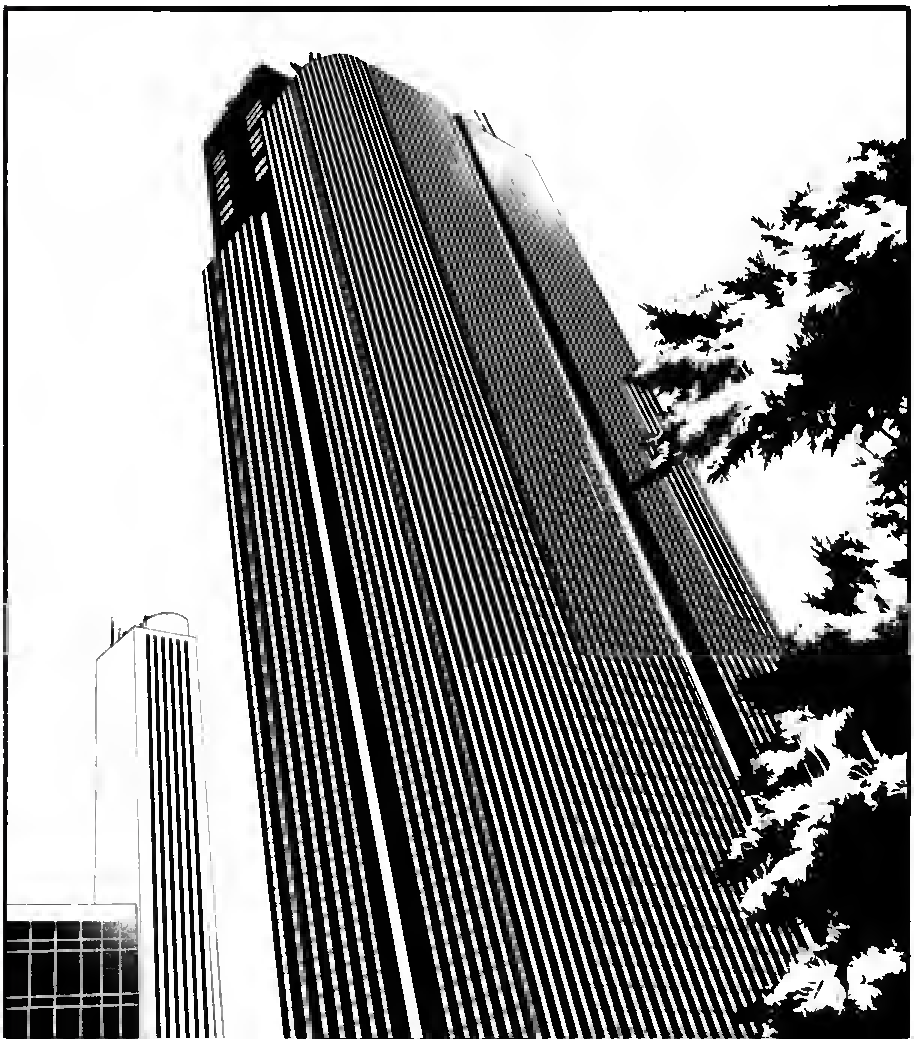
IT'S NOTHING NEW FOR ONE TO PURSUE THE THINGS ONE WANTS...
...EVEN AT THE COST OF FORSAKING ONE'S BIRTH STATUS, ISN'T IT?


HE'S GOT TIES WITH ARCANA...
...THE GROUP THAT WAS USING GUNGNIR.

YEAH, HIM.
HINATA, SIR?

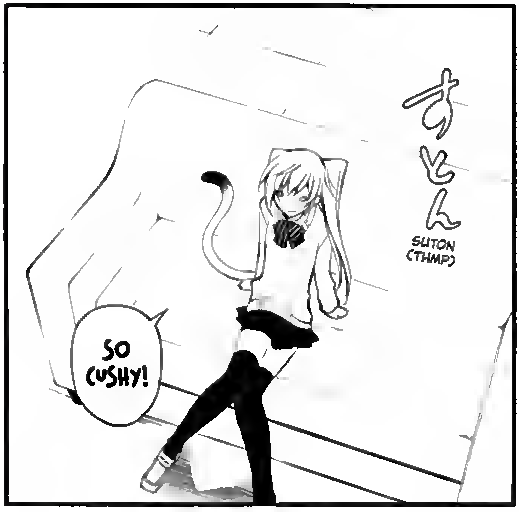
...ABOUT THAT OTHER HALF-BREED...
...OH, SPEAKING OF BETRAYAL...

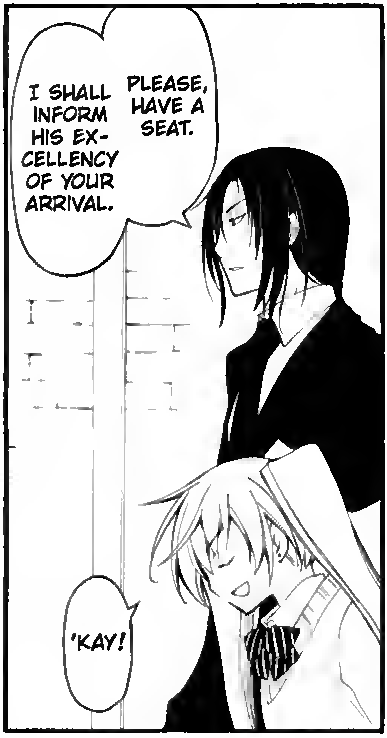
OH, REALLY?

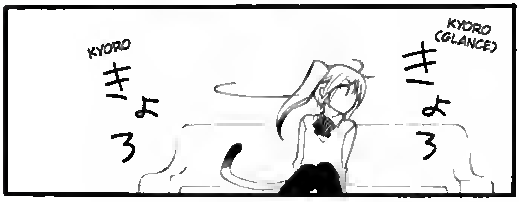


WELL?
THEY WERE RIGHT WHERE MOMOSE SAID, RIGHT?
HEE HEE.
THOSE TWO RELICS...
...YOU GUYS WANTED?
EH HEH!
GACHA (KLANK)
AFTER YOU.
POOON (DING)

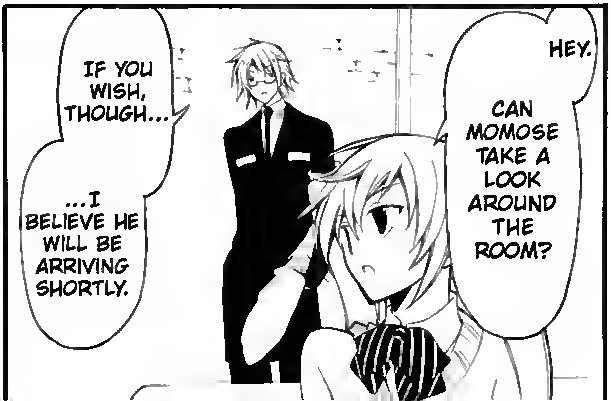
PLEASE, ENTER.


すとん
SUTON (THMP)
SO CUSHY!


PLEASE, HAVE A SEAT.
I SHALL INFORM HIS EXCELLENCY OF YOUR ARRIVAL.
'KAY!

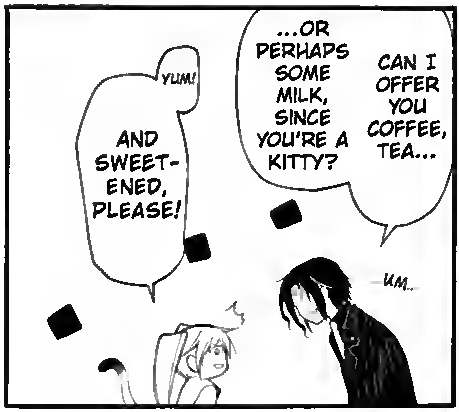

KYORO
きょろ
KYORO (GLANCE)
きょろ

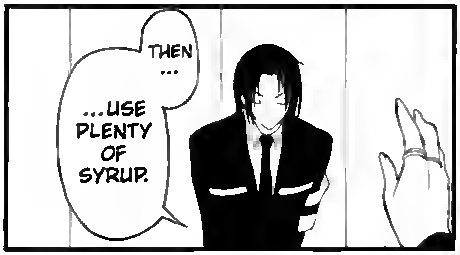
HMM. NEVER MIND, THEN.


IF YOU WISH, THOUGH...
...I BELIEVE HE WILL BE ARRIVING SHORTLY.
HEY.
CAN MOMOSE TAKE A LOOK AROUND THE ROOM?

I DON'T SENSE THERE'S ANYONE HIDING...
...AND THERE AREN'T TRAPS SET ANYWHERE... THAT I CAN SEE.
...BUT "HIS EXCELLENCY"? WHAT A SNOBBY TITLE... I WONDER WHAT HE'S LIKE?
NH...
THERE'S A CAMERA...? CRAP.
GACHA GACHAN
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING.

THANKS FOR PARTNERING WITH ARCANA.


CAN I OFFER YOU COFFEE, TEA...
...OR PERHAPS SOME MILK, SINCE YOU'RE A KITTY?
UM...
YUM!
AND SWEETENED, PLEASE!


THEN...
...USE PLENTY OF SYRUP.

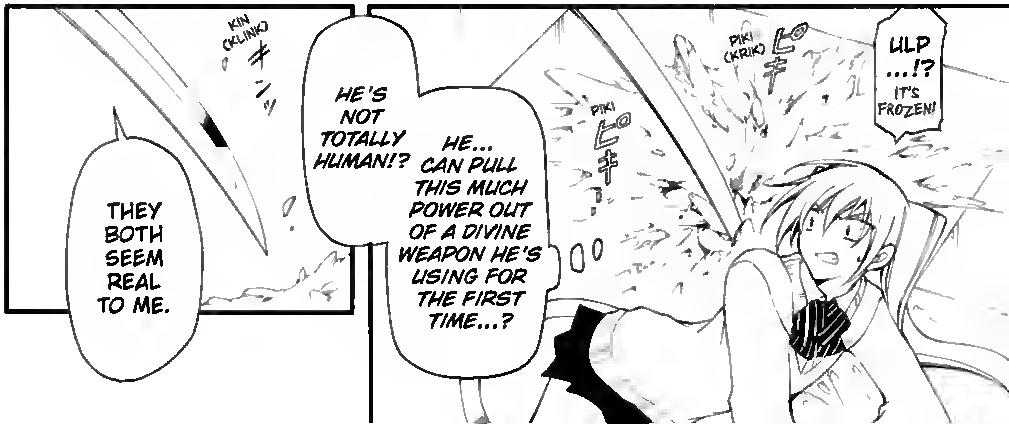
I'M THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ARCANA.
MY NAME IS IZUMI.

KUN (SNIFF)
KUN
IT'S NOT POISONED, IS IT?
ICED MILK WITH GUM SYRUP
THE CAM-ERA.
PLUS, IT'S MUCH BETTER...
...NOT TO LEAVE A RECORD OF SUCH SECRET TALKS.
IT'S AWFUL, NO? MAKES YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE BEING WATCHED?
DON'T WORRY, IT'S JUST A DUMMY... AN ANTI-THEFT MEASURE.
NOW, THEN ...
FIRST, I'D LIKE TO CONFIRM WHETHER THESE...
...ARE GENUINE OR NOT.
ARRO-GANT HUMAN.
SO HE THINKS HE CAN DEFEND HIMSELF EVEN IF THINGS GO SOUTH AND MOMOSE ATTACKS HIM...?
RIGHT.

GOD'S RELICS— "SABER"...
SHURU (UNFURL)
...AND "SLEET."
(FWOO)
IT CHANGED SHAPE!

HUH!?
WHA...?
FIRST...
...SABER.
TO (SLASH)
I'M GONNA SLICE HIM UP FROM INSIDE HIS SHADOW!
...SINCE I'D RATHER NOT DO TOO MUCH DAMAGE TO MY OFFICE.
I'LL GO EASY...
WHAT'S HE THINKING, ATTACKING A GUEST LIKE THAT!?
DOPU (BLURP)
CRAP!

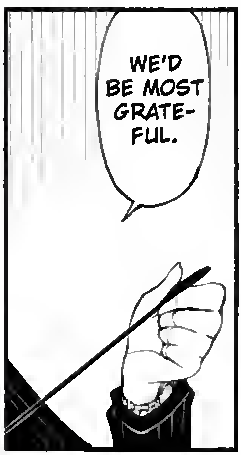
NEXT...
DOPLIN (SPLATCH)
...SLEET.
GA (KRUNCH)

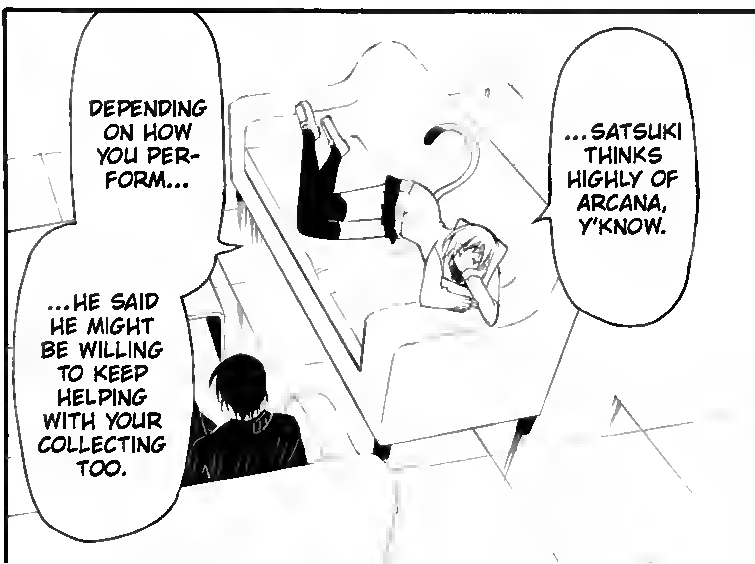

KIN (KLINK)
THEY BOTH SEEM REAL TO ME.
HE'S NOT TOTALLY HUMAN!?
HE... CAN PULL THIS MUCH POWER OUT OF A DIVINE WEAPON HE'S USING FOR THE FIRST TIME...?
PIKI (KRIK)
PIKI
ULP ...!? IT'S FROZEN!

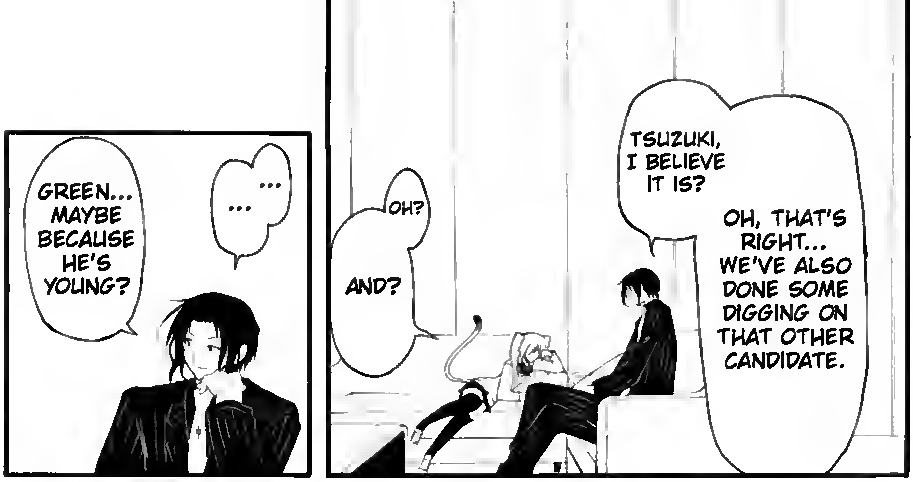
IT'S JUST ...
...I CAN'T ACCEPT ANY RELICS WITHOUT AUTHENTICATING THEM FIRST.
NO, NO...
ARE YOU TRYING TO PICK A FIGHT WITH SATSUKI!?
...OF COURSE THEY'RE REAL! JUST LIKE SATSUKI TOLD YOU!
PATAN (THWIP)
UNDERSTOOD.
TAKE THESE TO THE STORAGE VAULT ...
...THEN WITHDRAW UNTIL I CALL FOR YOU.
...!
...WELL, THEN.
GISHI (CREAK)
SHALL WE GET DOWN TO BUSINESS?

HMPH...
SO YOU GUYS ARE GONNA HELP US...
...COLLECT THE SECOND RELIC OF GOD?

YES.
SINCE YOU'VE DELIVERED ON YOUR END OF THE BARGAIN.


WE'D BE MOST GRATE-FUL.


...SATSUKI THINKS HIGHLY OF ARCANA, Y'KNOW.
DEPENDING ON HOW YOU PER-FORM...
...HE SAID HE MIGHT BE WILLING TO KEEP HELPING WITH YOUR COLLECTING TOO.


TSUZUKI, I BELIEVE IT IS?
OH, THAT'S RIGHT... WE'VE ALSO DONE SOME DIGGING ON THAT OTHER CANDIDATE.
OH?
AND?
... ...
GREEN... MAYBE BECAUSE HE'S YOUNG?

IN ANY CASE...
...THREE DAYS FROM NOW WHEN THE SECOND RELICS WILL APPEAR...
...I HAVE A PLAN IN THE WORKS THAT SHOULD PUT HIM AT A GREAT DISADVANTAGE.

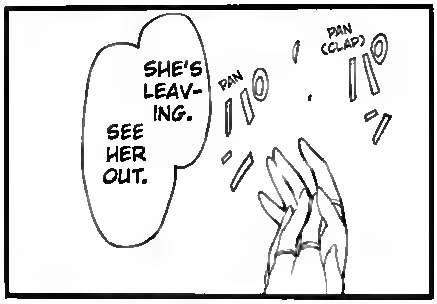
HMPH
GOOD.
THAT'S JUST WHAT WE WANTED TO HEAR.

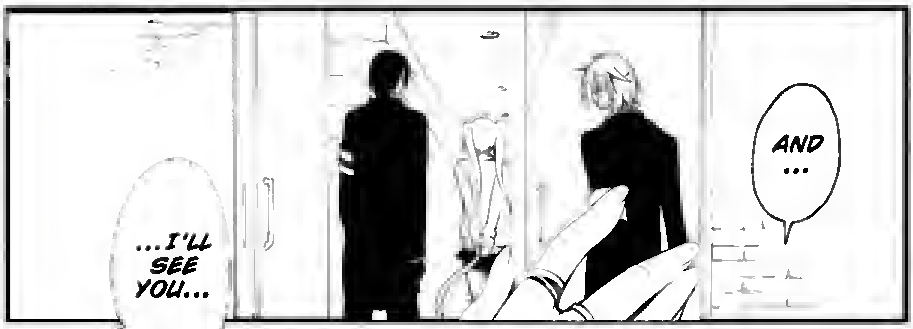
MOMOSE'S TIRED FROM ALL THIS RELIC RETRIEVAL.
FUA CYAWND

WELP!
TIME FOR MOMOSE TO GO.
THANK YOU FOR THE MILK
AL-READY ?

NIKO (GRIN)

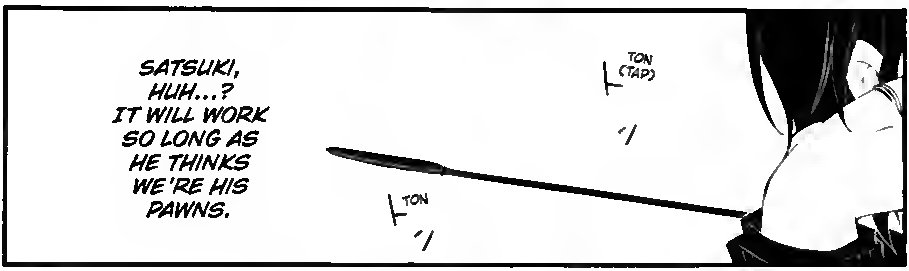
MO-MOSE WILL...
...TELL SATSUKI THAT ARCANA IS A GOOD BUNCH OF GUYS.
FOR NOW.

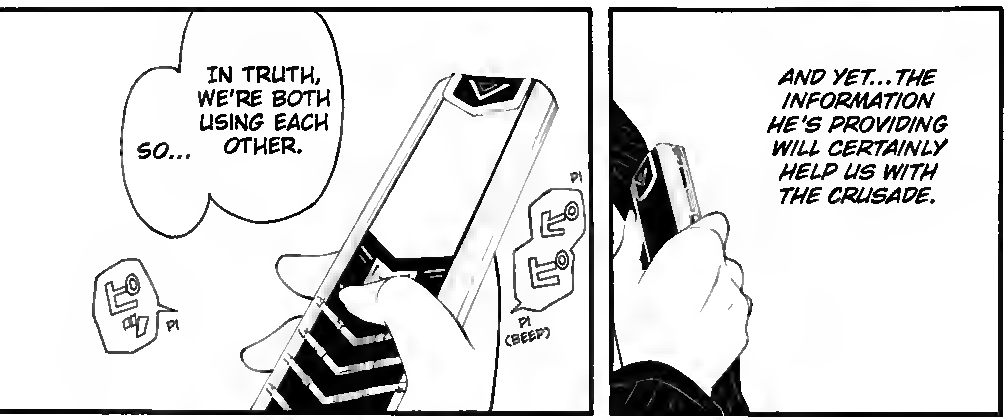

SHE'S LEAV-ING.
SEE HER OUT.
PAN
PAN (CLAP)


AND ...
...I'LL SEE YOU...

...IN THREE DAYS.

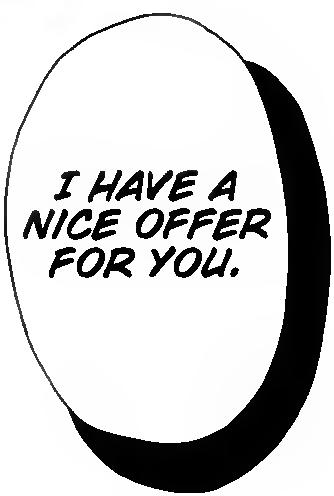
THINKS HIGHLY OF US... DOES HE?
.....
GIGHI (SQUIK)

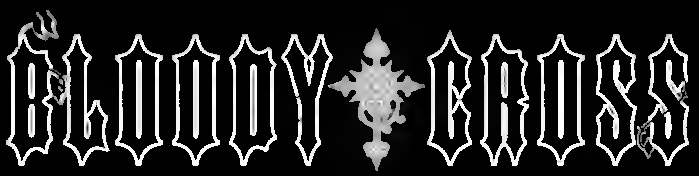

SATSUKI, HUH...? IT WILL WORK SO LONG AS HE THINKS WE'RE HIS PAWNS.
TON (TAP)
TON


SO... IN TRUTH, WE'RE BOTH USING EACH OTHER.
PI
PI
PI (BEEP)
AND YET...THE INFORMATION HE'S PROVIDING WILL CERTAINLY HELP US WITH THE CRUSADE.

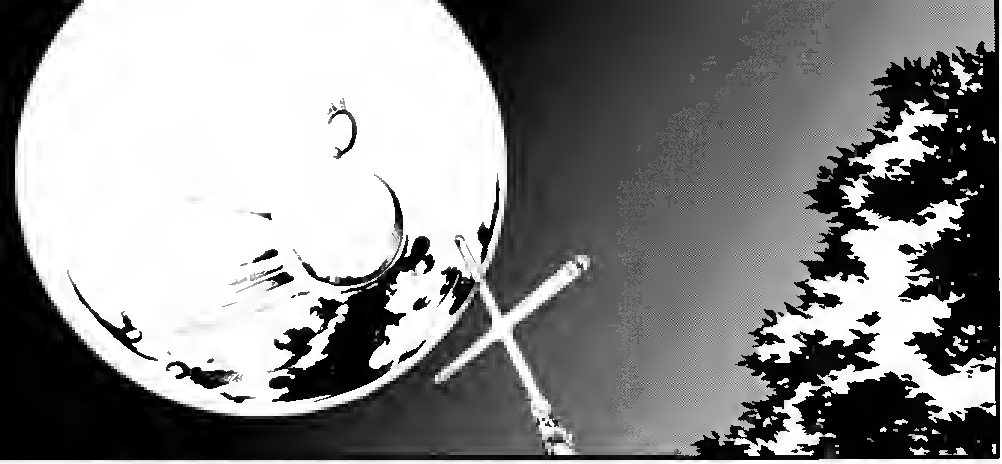
...ALL THAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IS HOW MUCH PROFIT WE'LL TURN.

CALL TIME
00 03
.....
...HEY, THERE ...

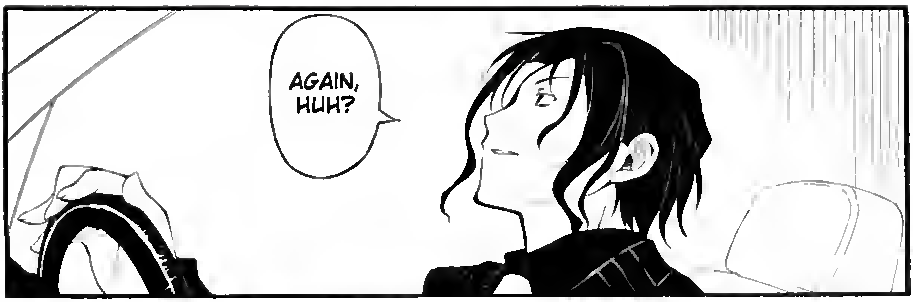

I HAVE A NICE OFFER FOR YOU.


BLOODY CROSS

BLOODY CROSS

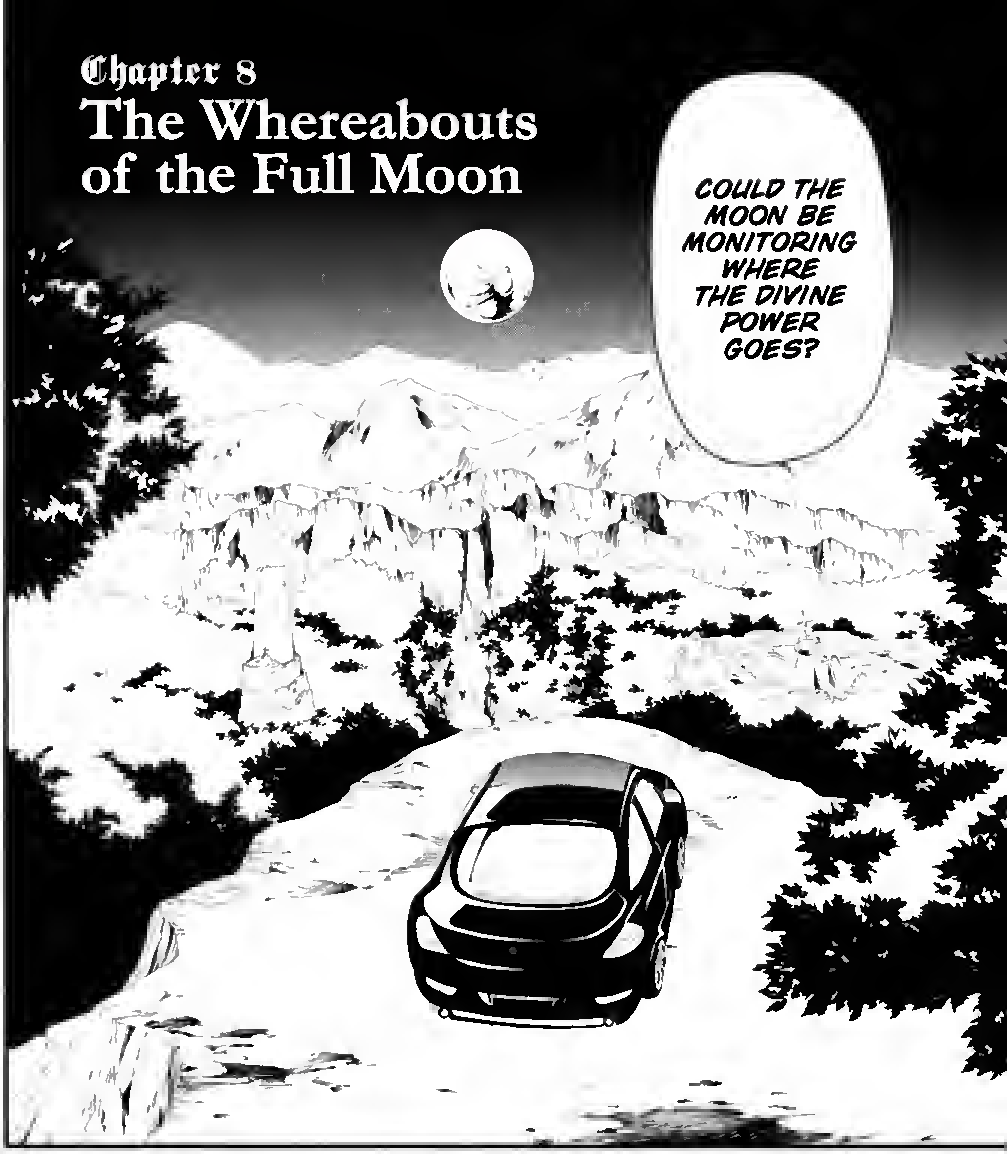


FULL MOON.

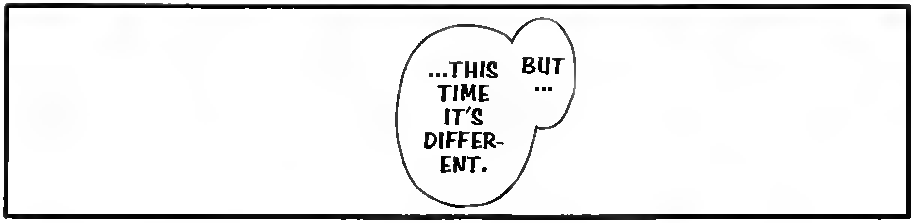

AGAIN, HUH?

WHENEVER GOD'S RELICS EMERGE...
...THE MOON ALWAYS WAXES FULL, REGARDLESS OF ITS ACTUAL PHASE.

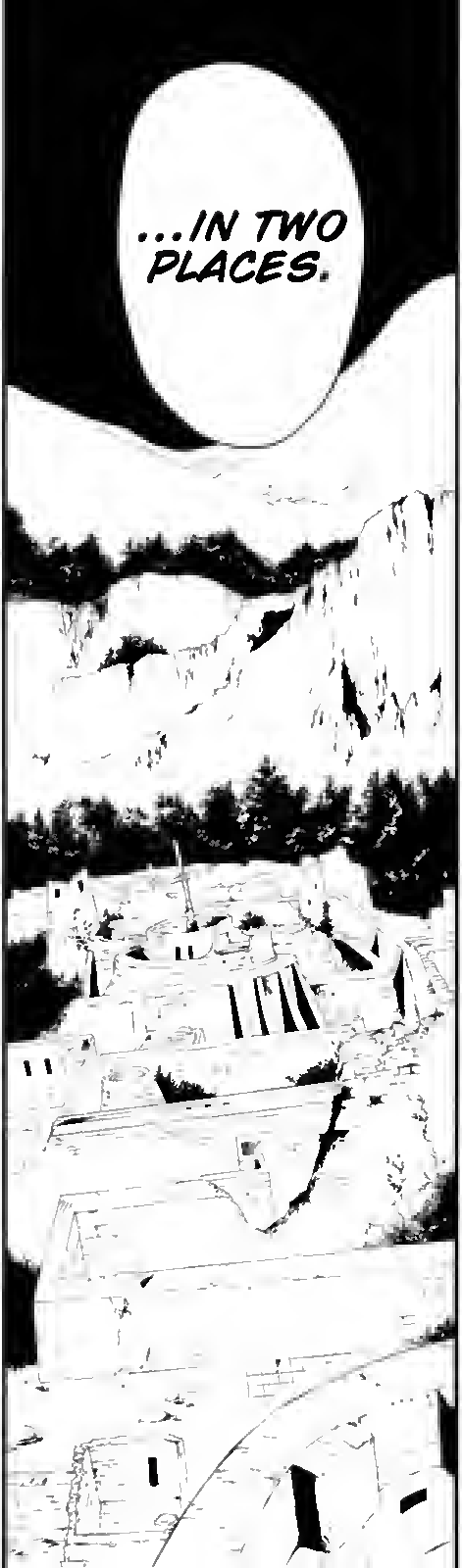
Chapter 8
The Whereabouts of the Full Moon



SO THOSE LOSERS SWIPED 'EM, AND WE HAD TO HUNT 'EM DOWN AND TAKE 'EM BACK.
...WE HAD A LATE START 'COS THE ORACLE ARRIVED AT THE EXACT SAME TIME.
WHEN THE FIRST RELICS— THE BOOK AND ITS KEY— SHOWED UP...

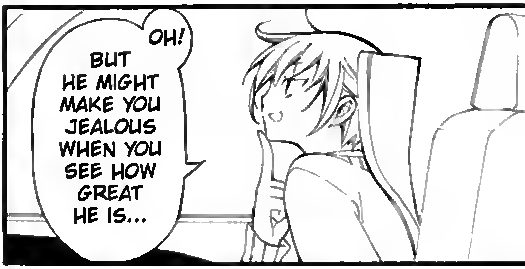

...THIS TIME IT'S DIFFER-ENT.
BUT ...

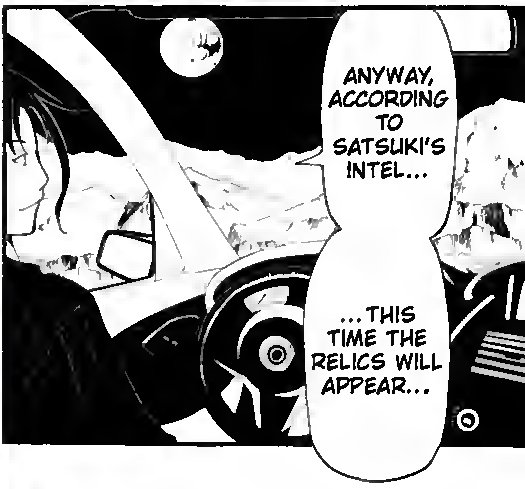
'COS SATSUKI'S DECIDED THAT'S HOW IT'S GOING DOWN!!
...AND THEY'RE ALL GONNA BE HIS!
SA-TSUKI IS ON THE MOVE ...
PASHI (WHAP)


...IN TWO PLACES.

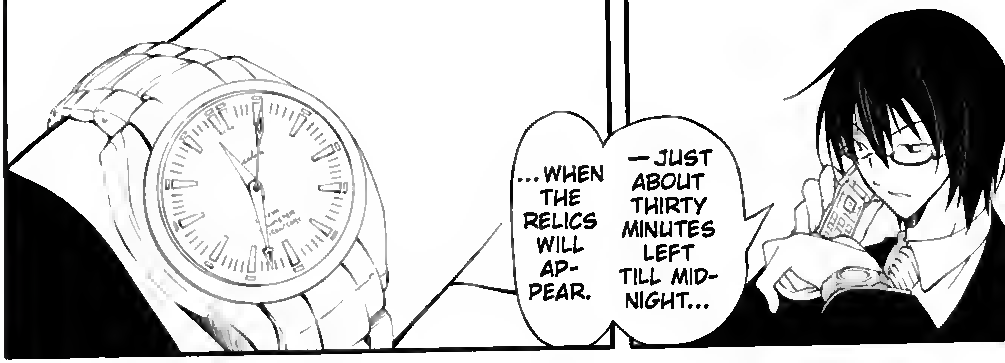
YOU'RE REALLY DEVOTED TO SATSUKI, AREN'T YOU?

MO-MOSE LOVES HIM!
SHE'S SURE YOU'LL COME TO LIKE HIM TOO.

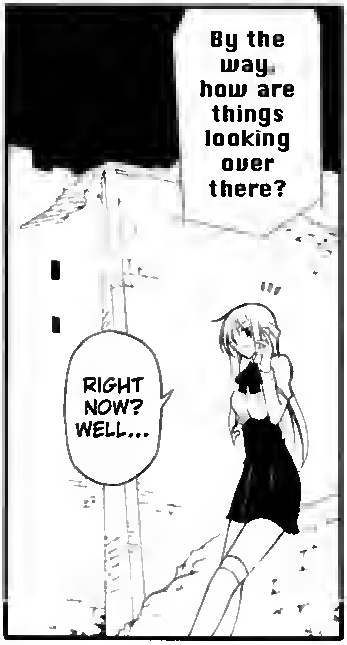

OH!
BUT HE MIGHT MAKE YOU JEALOUS WHEN YOU SEE HOW GREAT HE IS...


ANYWAY, ACCORDING TO SATSUKI'S INTEL...
...THIS TIME THE RELICS WILL APPEAR...

YUP.
TWO SPOTS.
BUT UNTIL THEY ACTUALLY SHOW UP, WE HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING...
...IF THEY'RE A SET LIKE THE BOOK AND ITS KEY...
...OR TWO INDIVIDUAL ITEMS, OR IF ONE'S A FRAUD.
SO TO MAKE SURE THEY BOTH WIND UP IN MY POSSESSION, WE HAD TO SPLIT UP!
PROBLEM SOLVED!
DID... ...YOU CATCH THAT?


—JUST ABOUT THIRTY MINUTES LEFT TILL MIDNIGHT...
...WHEN THE RELICS WILL APPEAR.

WE BOTH NEED TO BE IN PLACE BEFORE THEN.


By the way, how are things looking over there?
RIGHT NOW? WELL...

OKAY.
DON'T WORRY. I'LL SEE YOU GET YOUR MONEY'S WORTH.

...I'VE TAKEN OUT TEN OR SO DEMONS WHO WERE LYING IN WAIT.

...SPEAKING OF WHICH...
...THAT'S WHO HINATA IS IN LEAGUE WITH, ISN'T IT?
THAT'S JUST UNBELIEVABLE.

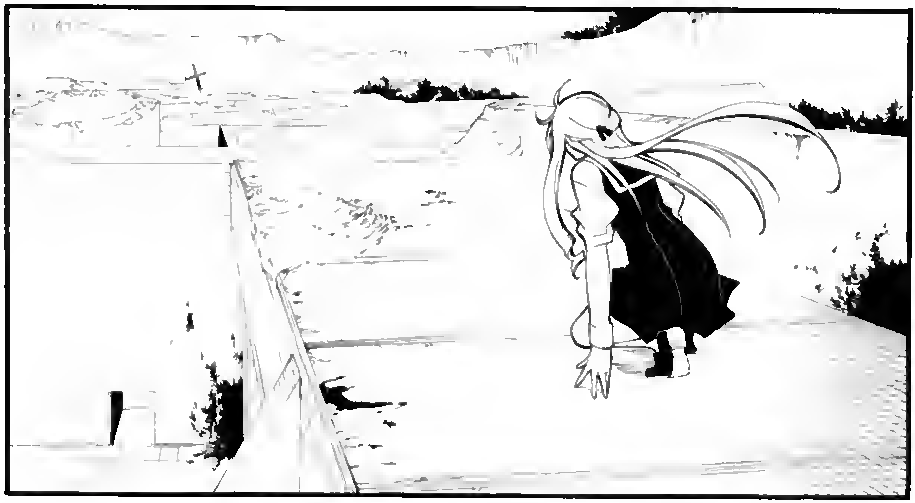
DEMONS?
I think they're from that Arcana group you mentioned.

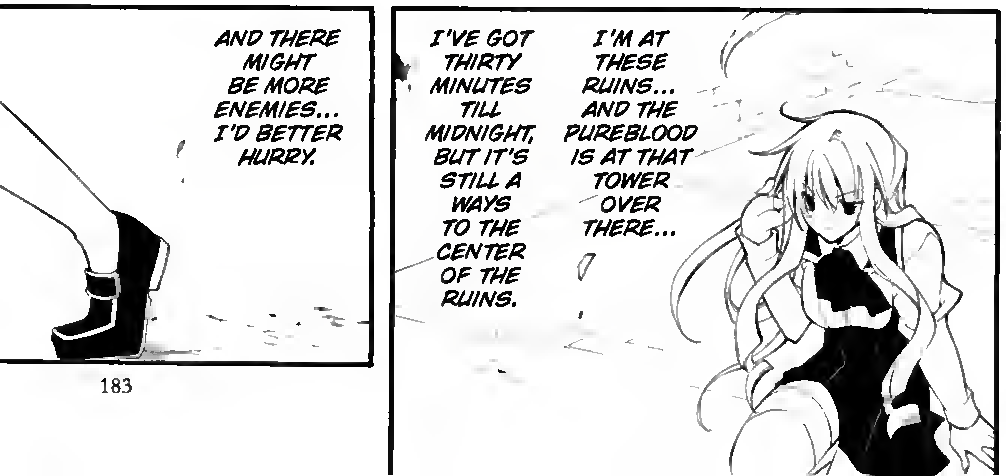
That's all for now.
I'll call if anything else comes up.
OH!
STRICTLY A BUSINESS CALL.
BUTSU (BZZP)

...!
SOUNDS LIKE IT'S ARCANA.

...HMPH. ARCANA, HUH?
...BUT THEY SHOULDN'T BE SHOWING UP IN THE EXACT SPOT AHEAD OF US LIKE THIS.
OTHERS CAN GUESS AND GET CLOSE...
MEAN-ING...
THE EXACT POINTS WHERE CRUSADE RELICS WILL EMERGE ...
...SHOULD ONLY BE KNOWN TO ORACLE RE-CIPIENTS— SATSUKI AND ME.
HIRA (FLUTTER)
...WE NOW KNOW FOR CERTAIN THAT SATSU-KI...
...HAS HOOKED UP...
...WITH ARCANA.

ARE YOU PLEASED? I'M GLAD FOR YOU.
...
...IT'S AN OUTCOME WE HAD HOPED TO AVOID, SINCE IT ONLY MAKES THINGS MORE DIFFICULT FOR US.
YES, BUT...
WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE I DIDN'T CALL IT!
I'M SO GOOD!

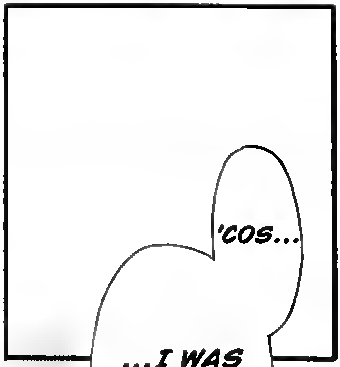


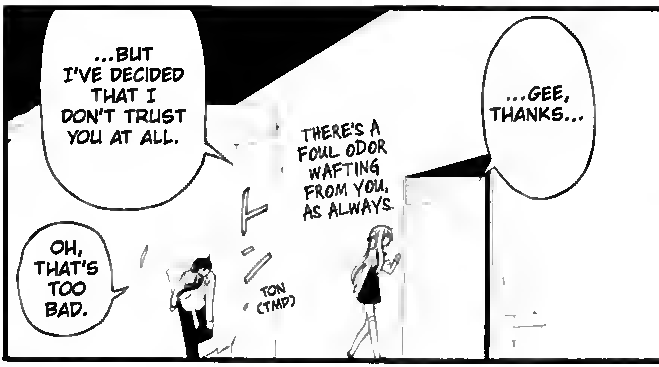

I'M AT THESE RUINS... AND THE PUREBLOOD IS AT THAT TOWER OVER THERE...
I'VE GOT THIRTY MINUTES TILL MIDNIGHT, BUT IT'S STILL A WAYS TO THE CENTER OF THE RUINS.
AND THERE MIGHT BE MORE ENEMIES... I'D BETTER HURRY.

もに
MO (SQUISH)
WHA ...?
HUGE.
...MMM, BUT I CAN'T GET A GOOD FEEL THROUGH THESE CLOTHES.
BARE SKIN WOULD BE SO MUCH BETTER...
YOU ...!
もみ
MOMISHI (KNEAD)
HEY!
WHAT THE...!?
ぬがし
NUGASHI (STRIP)

HMM?
ZUGA (SHOONK)
PERV!!
...WHAT IS IT, PERV?
SO... COLD!
PLEASE FORGIVE ME! WAIT! I WANNA TALK!
NO WAY!
HUH!?
SUTA (STRIDE)
BYE.
...OH, HI.
NICE RACK TODAY, AS ALWAYS.

...AND IT'D BE A BIG PAIN IN THE ASS.
...ARE A BUNCH OF ARCANA GUYS...
IT'S JUST...I THOUGHT I'D TELL YOU THAT RIGHT THROUGH THERE...


'COS...
...I WAS GONNA SAY...


...BUT I'VE DECIDED THAT I DON'T TRUST YOU AT ALL.
OH, THAT'S TOO BAD.
TON (TMP)
THERE'S A FOUL ODOR WAFTING FROM YOU, AS ALWAYS.
...GEE, THANKS...

...I'D RECOMMEND THIS PATH BEHIND YOU.

...THAT'S RARE.
HINATA SAID THOSE WORDS WITHOUT A SINGLE WHIFF OF UNTRUTH.
.....
WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THAT?
I JUST FEEL LIKE GUIDING YOU TO THE RELIC... THAT'S NOT ENOUGH?
I DON'T PARTICULARLY LIKE BEING USED BY ARCANA.
WANT SOME CHOCOLATE?
AND THAT'S NOT A LIE EITHER...
SFX: PORI CKRNCH PORI PORI

AH!
HOLD ON! I'LL COME WITH YOU!
E E E E K
IS THIS A NIGHTMARE!?
DOES NOT COMPUTE ...!!

...BUT!
THIS IS GIVING ME GOOSE-BUMPS!!
KUWA (FLUSH)

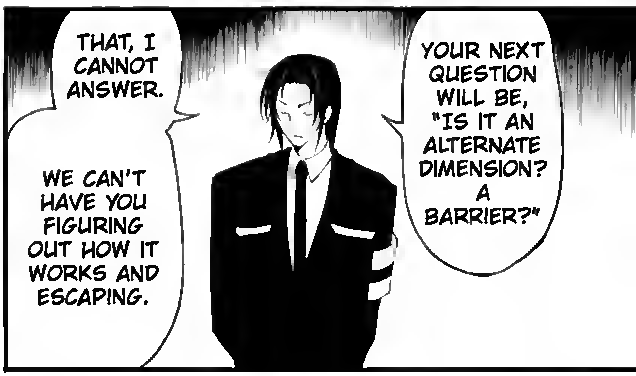
DOSA
(WHUMP)
...WHAT'S GOING ON?

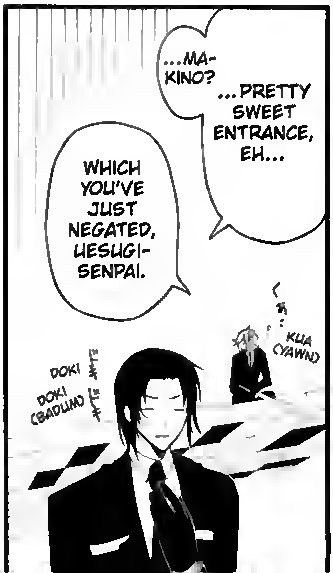
I KNOW I WAS JUST FIGHTING OFF ARCANA FELLOWS IN THE WOODS...

...SO WHERE THE HECK ARE WE NOW?

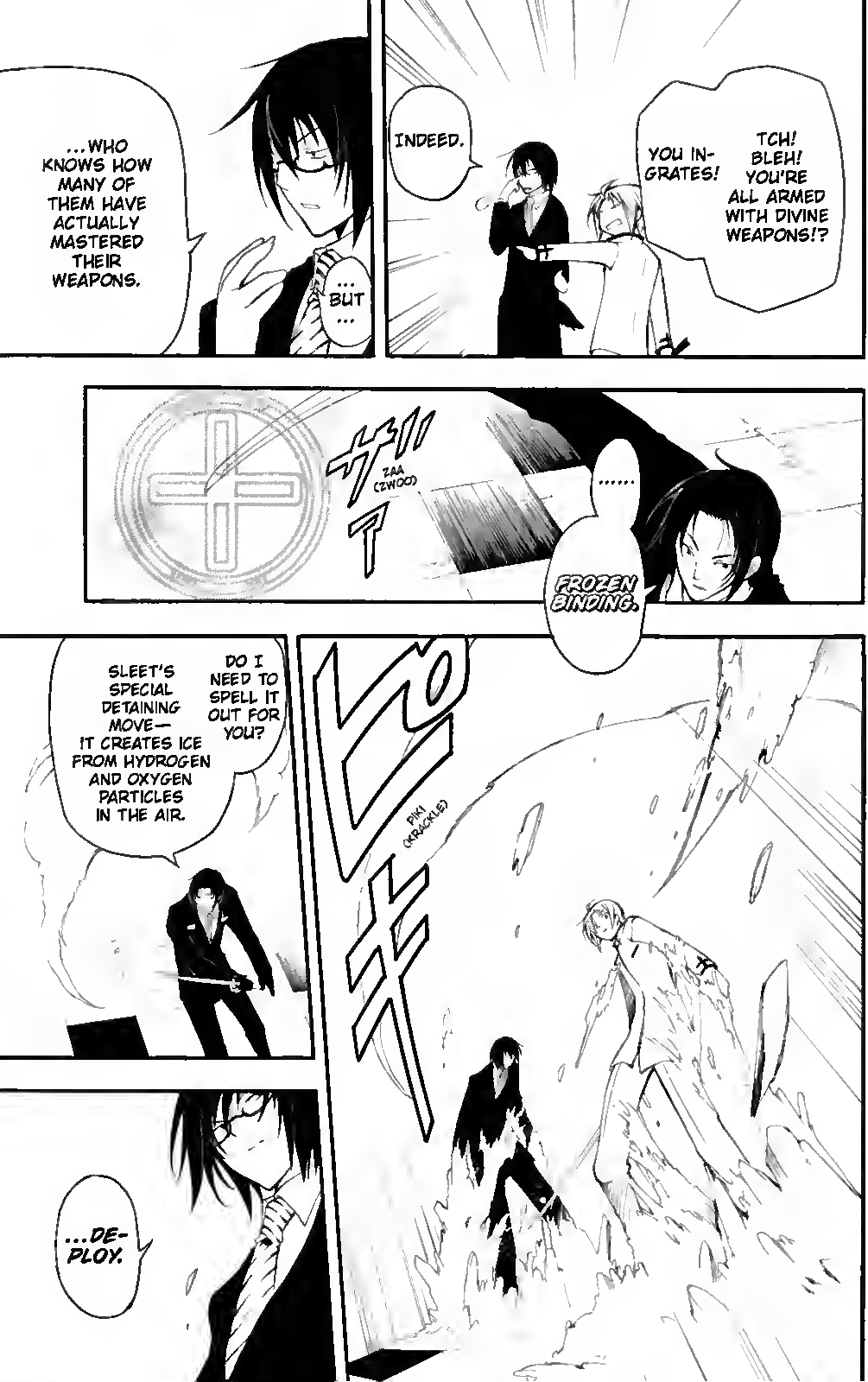
TEN TO MIDNIGHT...
WHEN I CHECKED A MOMENT AGO, WE STILL HAD TWENTY MINUTES LEFT...
...BUT NOW THERE'S ONLY TEN...?
TIME PASSES MORE QUICKLY IN *HERE.*
IT FLOWS ROUGHLY THREE TIMES FASTER...
...THAN THE TIME PLANE WE'RE USED TO.
KOTSU (TOK)

DO I NEED TO SPELL IT OUT FOR YOU?


THAT, I CANNOT ANSWER.
WE CAN'T HAVE YOU FIGURING OUT HOW IT WORKS AND ESCAPING.
YOUR NEXT QUESTION WILL BE, "IS IT AN ALTERNATE DIMENSION? A BARRIER?"


...MAKINO?
...PRETTY SWEET ENTRANCE, EH...
WHICH YOU'VE JUST NEGATED, UESUGI-SENPAI.
KUA (YAWN)
DOKI DOKI (BADUM)

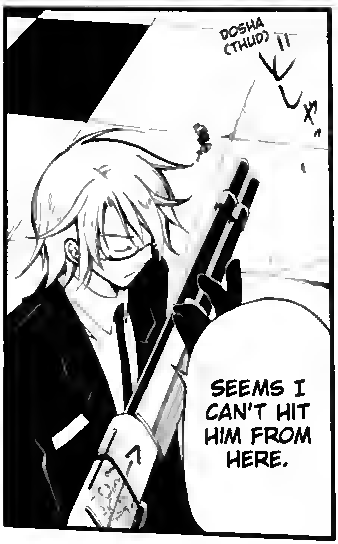
YOU TWO... ...WILL STAY HERE UNTIL THE CRUSADE IS OVER.
...IT'S GONNA BE A DULL STAY, WE KNOW.


...WHO KNOWS HOW MANY OF THEM HAVE ACTUALLY MASTERED THEIR WEAPONS.
...BUT...
INDEED.
YOU INGRATES!
TCH! BLEH! YOU'RE ALL ARMED WITH DIVINE WEAPONS!?
ZAA (ZWOO)
.....
FROZEN BINDING.
SLEET'S SPECIAL DETAINING MOVE— IT CREATES ICE FROM HYDROGEN AND OXYGEN PARTICLES IN THE AIR.
DO I NEED TO SPELL IT OUT FOR YOU?
PIKI (KRACKLE)
...DEPLOY.

SALVO.
ZAA CZWOOSH
GA
GA CBLAM
GUESS I'M HANDLING THE TOP.
HUP.

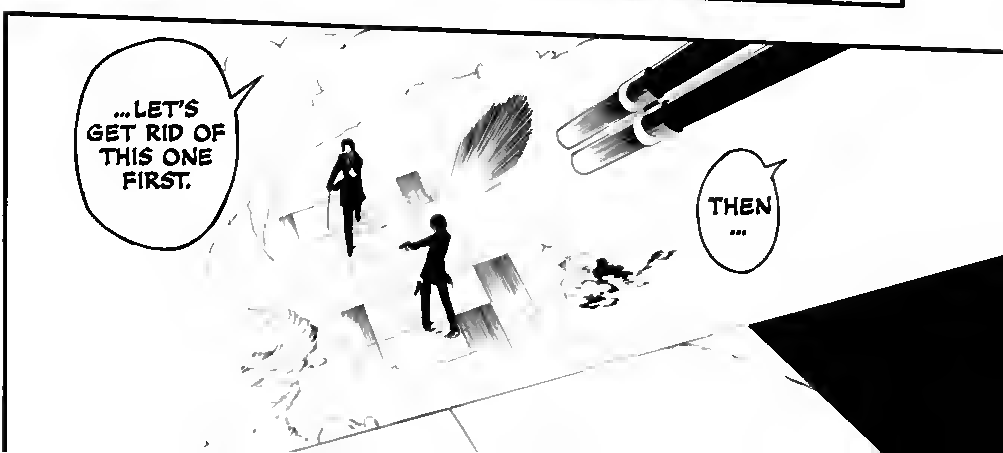
...VERY WELL.
LET'S PLAY.
DOGA GERUNCHO
UH!
WHOA!
GIMME THAT.
HUH!?
HEY...
GAKI GERACHO

DON
DON
DON
DON
DON
DON
DON

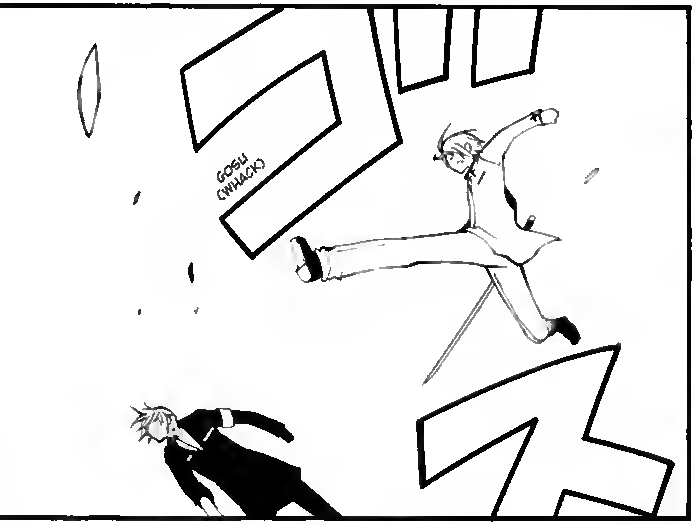

DOSHA (THUD)
SEEMS I CAN'T HIT HIM FROM HERE.

DON
DON
DON
DON
HEY!
STOP IT!
YOU'RE HITTING OUR GUYS TOO!!

DON

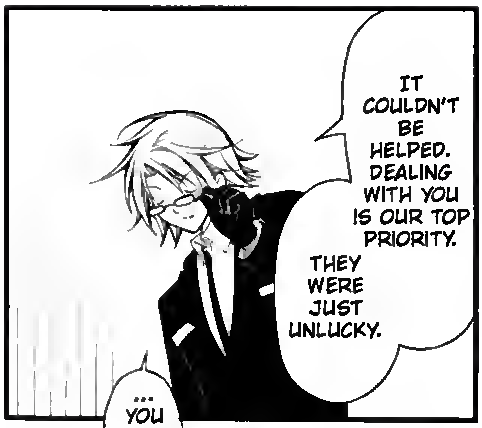

...LET'S GET RID OF THIS ONE FIRST.
THEN ...

OH!
!!
HEY ...!
HANA-MURA!!
DO
DO
DO
DO
DO
DO (THOOM)
DO

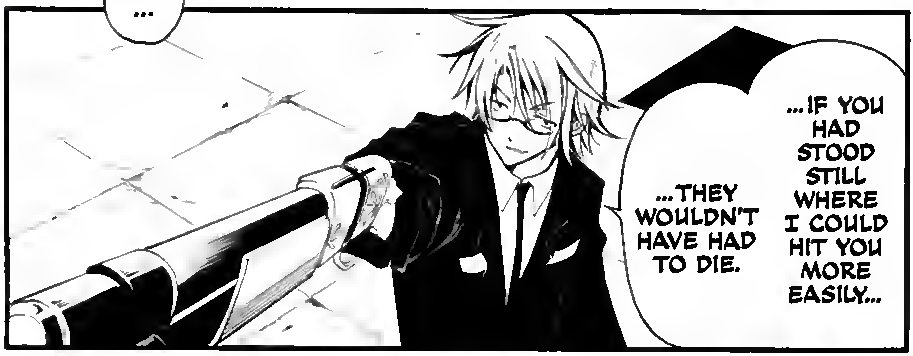

GOSH (WHACK)

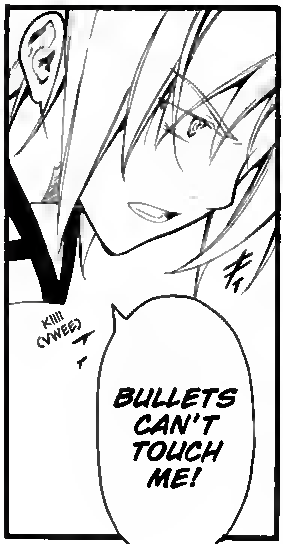
...HUH?
NO HITS HERE EITHER?
DA (TMP)
DA
DA
DA

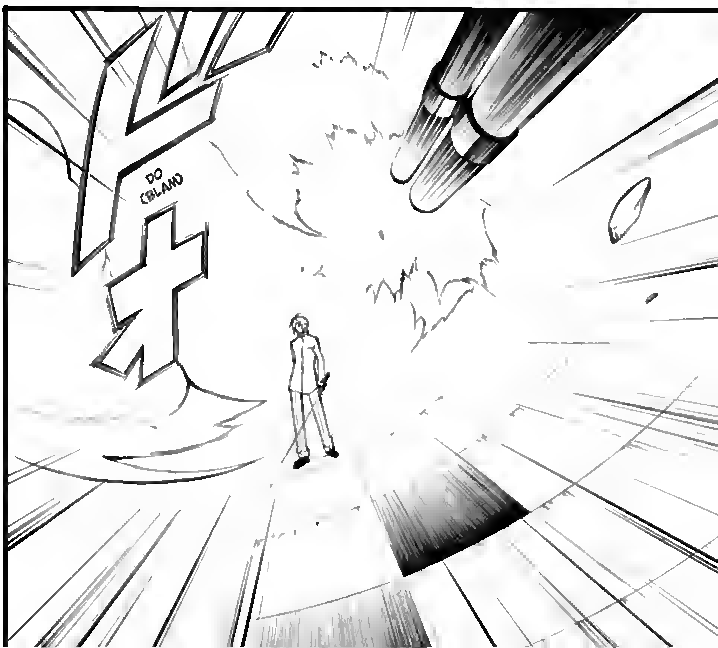
WHAT THE HELL? HAVE YOU COMPLETELY LOST IT?


IT COULDN'T BE HELPED. DEALING WITH YOU IS OUR TOP PRIORITY.
THEY WERE JUST UNLUCKY.
... YOU KNOW ...

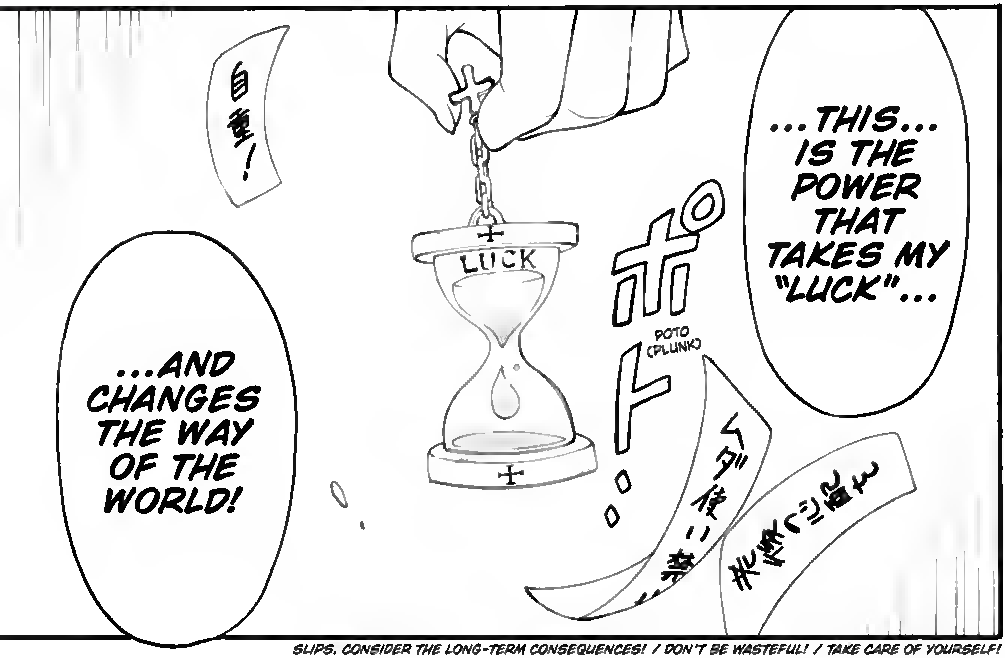
...IN ANY CASE, I THINK...
...YOU OWE THOSE CORPSES OVER THERE AN APOLOGY.
TO (TMP)


...IF YOU HAD STOOD STILL WHERE I COULD HIT YOU MORE EASILY...
...THEY WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO DIE.


KIIII (VWEE)
BULLETS CAN'T TOUCH ME!


DO (BLAM)

SLIPS! DON'T BE WASTEFUL! / TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!



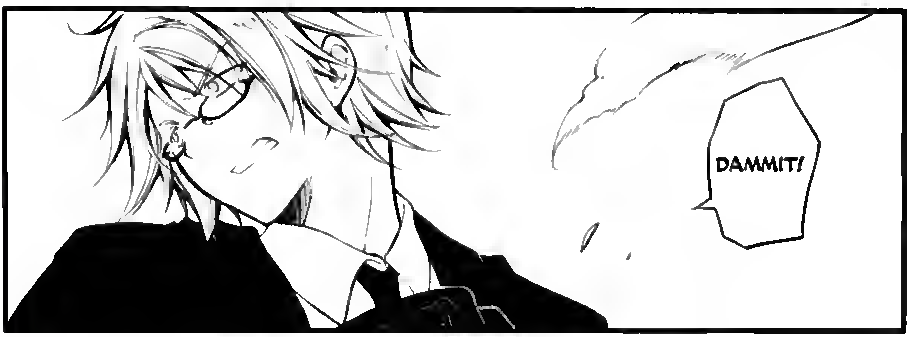
SLIPS. CONSIDER THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES! / DON'T BE WASTEFUL! / TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!

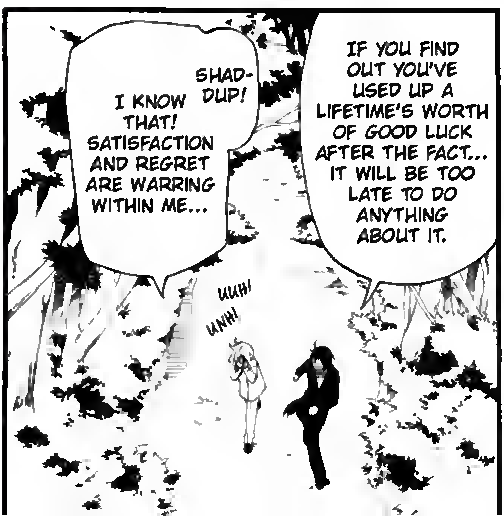
I SHALL BREAK FREE!
LUCK
DESTROY THIS SPACE-TIME AND ESCAPE!!

I SHALL BREAK FREE!
LUCK

DESTROY THIS SPACE-TIME AND ESCAPE!!

PARIIN
(SHATTER)


DAMMIT!


I KNOW THAT! SATISFACTION AND REGRET ARE WARRING WITHIN ME...
SHAD- DUP!
IF YOU FIND OUT YOU'VE USED UP A LIFETIME'S WORTH OF GOOD LUCK AFTER THE FACT... IT WILL BE TOO LATE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.
UUH! UHH!

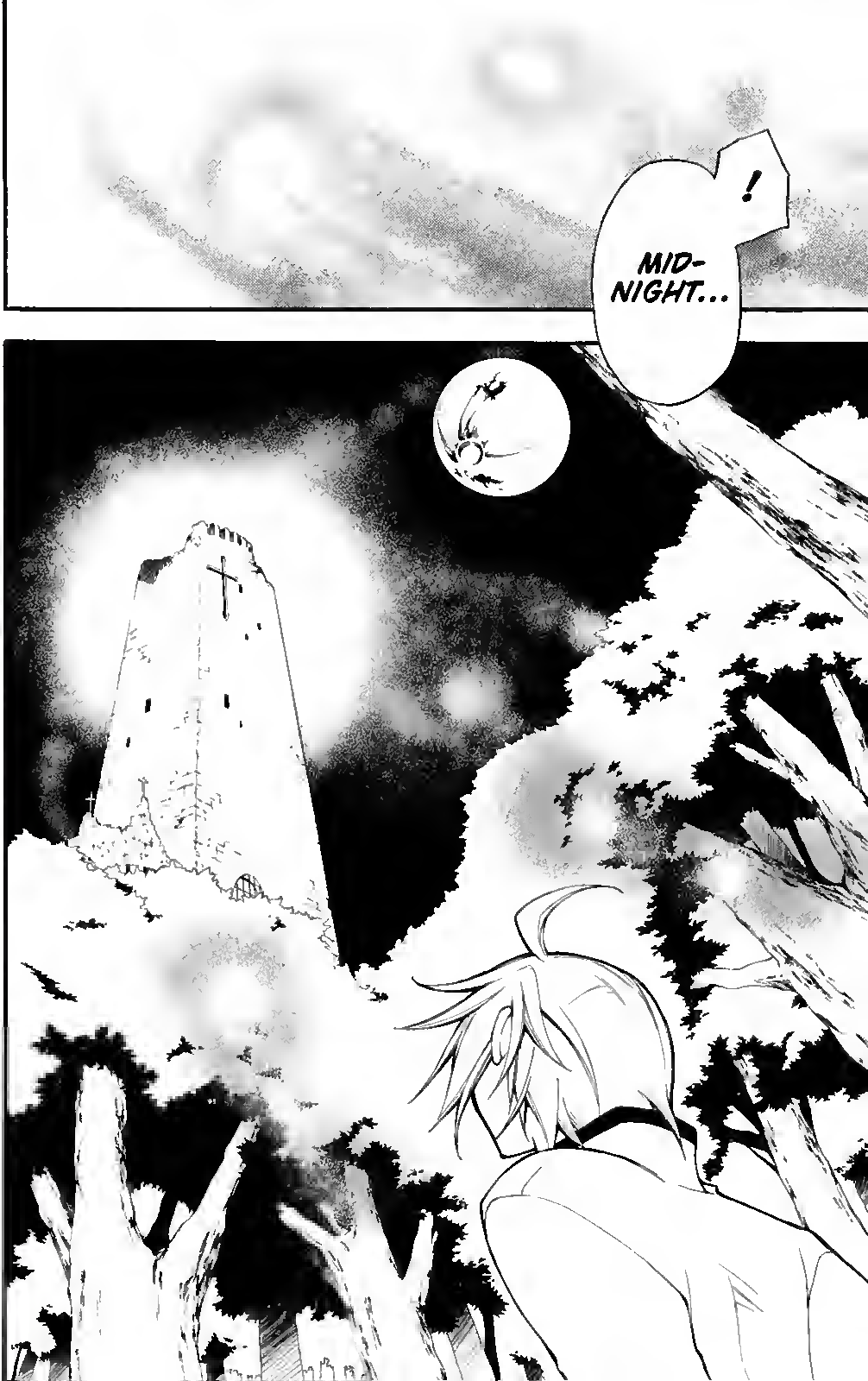
YOU SQUAN- DERED IT AGAIN...

...BUT THE FACT IS, I RESORTED TO USING ITS POWER.
SO IF WE MISS OUT ON THE RELIC, IT WILL TRULY BE A WASTE.
LET'S MOVE IT!

BI (POINT)
AS LONG AS "OBTAINING THE RELIC" ISN'T HOPELESS...

TWO KILOMETERS TO THE TOWER.
THE LOSS OF TIME IS GOING TO HURT US.
ARRIVING BEFORE THE RELIC APPEARS MAY BE HOPELESS.
HA!!

...I'LL TAKE IT!!


!
MID-
NIGHT...

A PAIR OF RELICS...
...HAS BEGUN TO EMERGE!

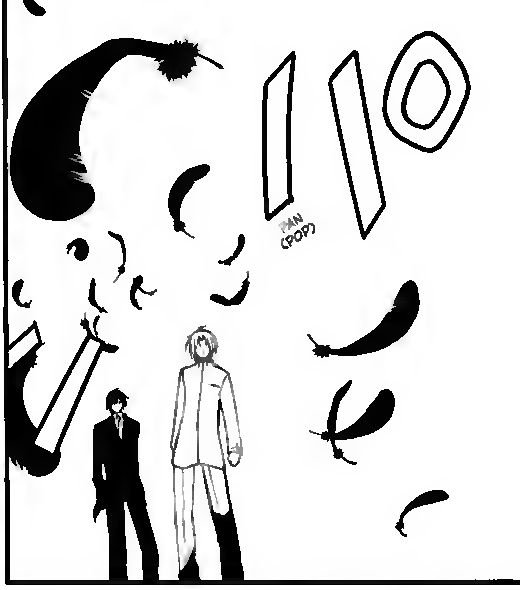
GA (GRAB)
AND ANYWAY, WE NEED TO REGROUP AND RE-ORGANIZE FIRST...
MAKINO, STOP! WE WEREN'T ORDERED TO PURSUE!
ZUKA
...! MAKINO!
ZUKA (STOMP)

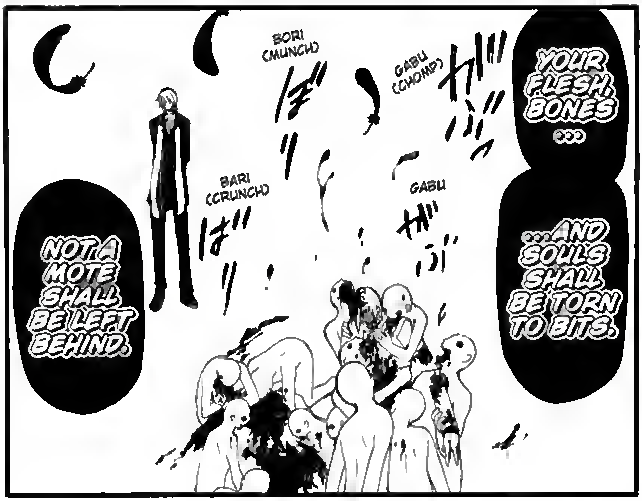
BO (BOOM)
YOU'RE IN THE WAY.
SORRY, SENPAI.

!
SA-TSUKI !!
TSU-ZUKI ...
THE OTHER ORACLE RECIPI-ENT...
YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO ME IS... UHH...
...MY MEMORY'S ESPECIALLY UNSTABLE TODAY...
"SIBLING"...
...ISN'T IT? I THINK THAT'S IT.
YOU'RE YOUNGER BY TWO YEARS.

SA-TSUKI !!
!
TSU-ZUKI ...
THE OTHER ORACLE RECIPI-ENT...
YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO ME IS... UHH...
...MY MEMORY'S ESPECIALLY UNSTABLE TODAY...
"SIBLING"...
...ISN'T IT? I THINK THAT'S IT.
YOU'RE YOUNGER BY TWO YEARS.

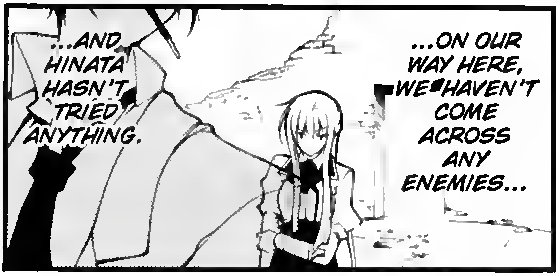
...THEN, LITTLE BROTHER TSUZUKI AND ATTENDANT...
...BE DEVOURED BY THE DEAD.


110
PAN (POP)

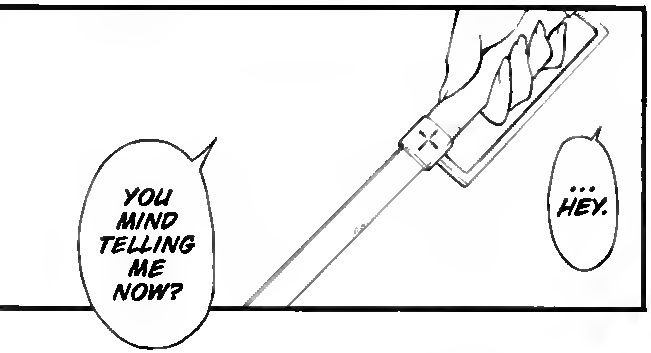

BORI (CRUNCH)
GABU (CHOMP)
BARI (CRUNCH)
GABU
YOUR FLESH, BONES ...
...AND SOULS SHALL BE TORN TO BITS.
NOT A MOTE SHALL BE LEFT BEHIND.

...YOU'RE ALL BARK AND NO BITE...
...LITTLE BROTHER.

...SO THIS ...
...IS ONE OF THE SECOND RELICS?

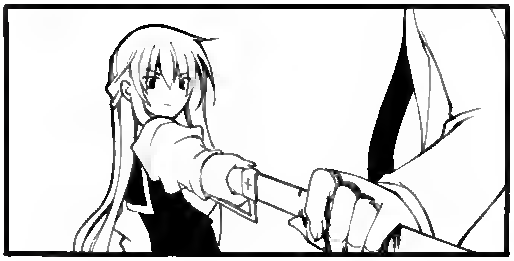

...AND HINATA HASN'T TRIED ANYTHING.
...ON OUR WAY HERE, WE HAVEN'T COME ACROSS ANY ENEMIES...

THERE DON'T SEEM TO BE ANY ARCANA AROUND.
LUCKY FOR US!


...HEY.
YOU MIND TELLING ME NOW?

WHAT IS IT YOU'VE GOT UP YOUR SLEEVE TODAY?
TELL ME WHY YOU'VE SO GENEROUSLY GUIDED ME HERE.
MOGU CHUNCHO
SU (FREACHO)
I ALREADY TOLD YOU BEFORE.
AWW... YOU DOUBT ME?
YOU MEAN ...
I DON'T LIKE BEING USED BY ARCANA...
...SO I'M GUIDING YOU TO THE RELIC.
POTA (DRIP)
POTA

...AGAIN...
NO LIES.

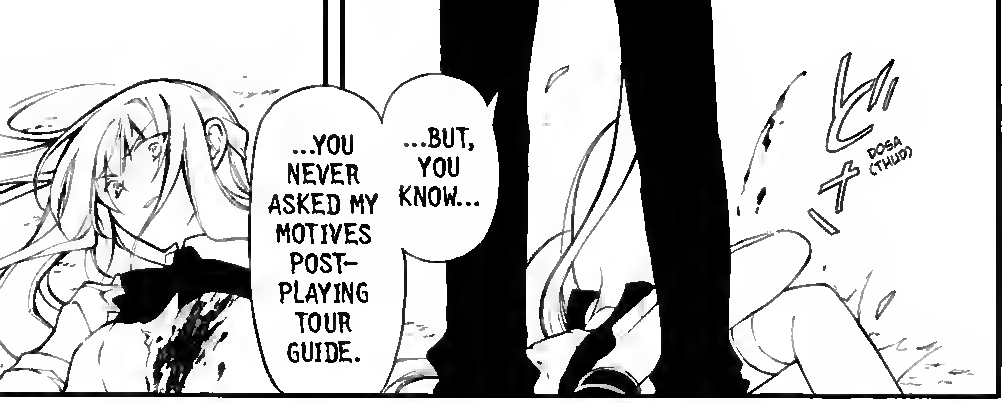


...LET...
...GO.

I MEAN, FOR REAL!? YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING!?
HINATA WOULD NOT MAKE A MOVE FOR A REASON LIKE THAT!
...TCH! AS IF!
THAT HINATA!?
HINATA!?

SU (FWSH)
—...
YOU'RE ALWAYS SO FRUSTRATINGLY AMBIGUOUS.

ビシャ
BISHA (SPLAT)
YEAH...
...I GET THAT A LOT.
...HUH?

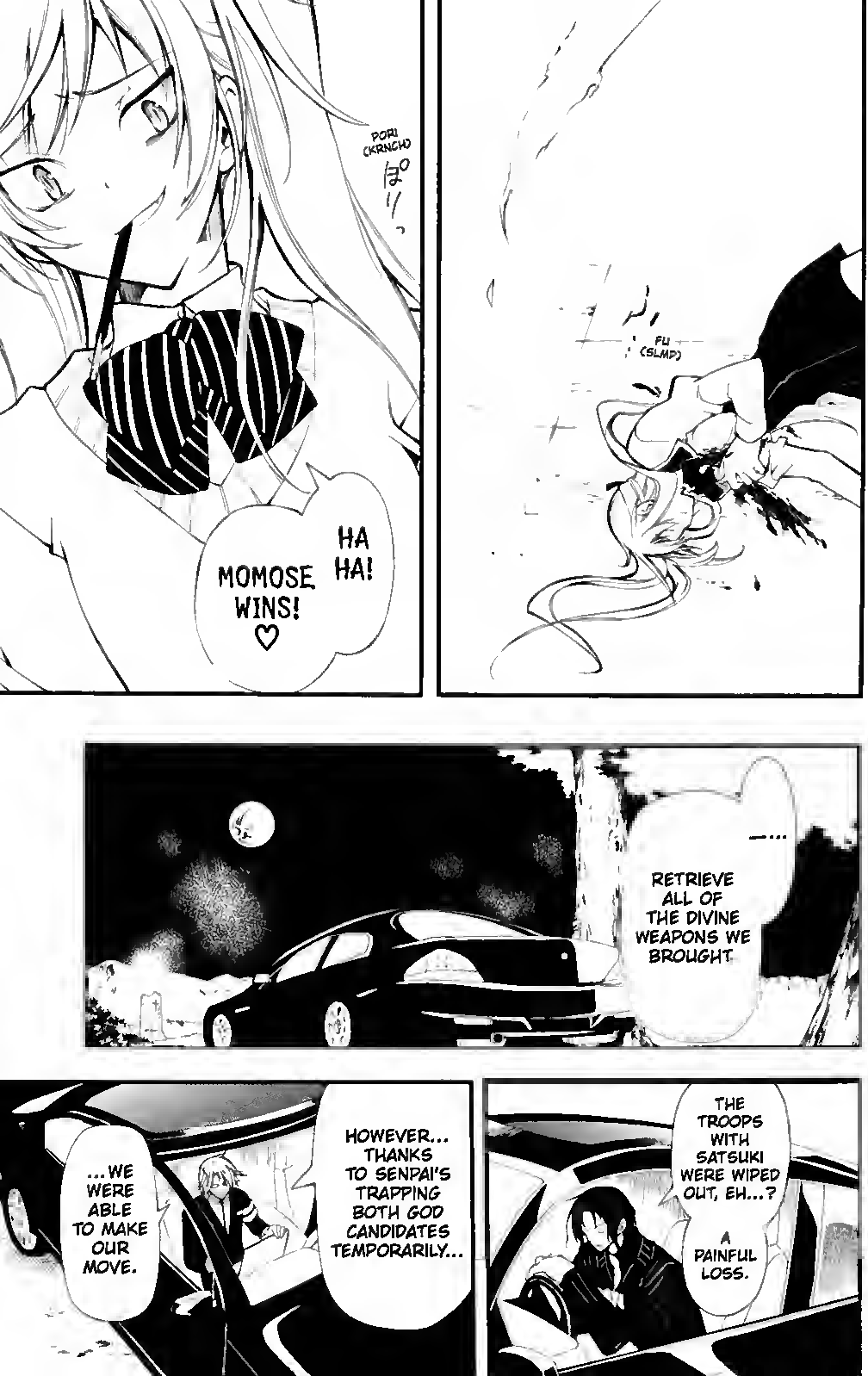

...BUT, YOU KNOW...
...YOU NEVER ASKED MY MOTIVES POST-PLAYING TOUR GUIDE.
DOSA (THUD)

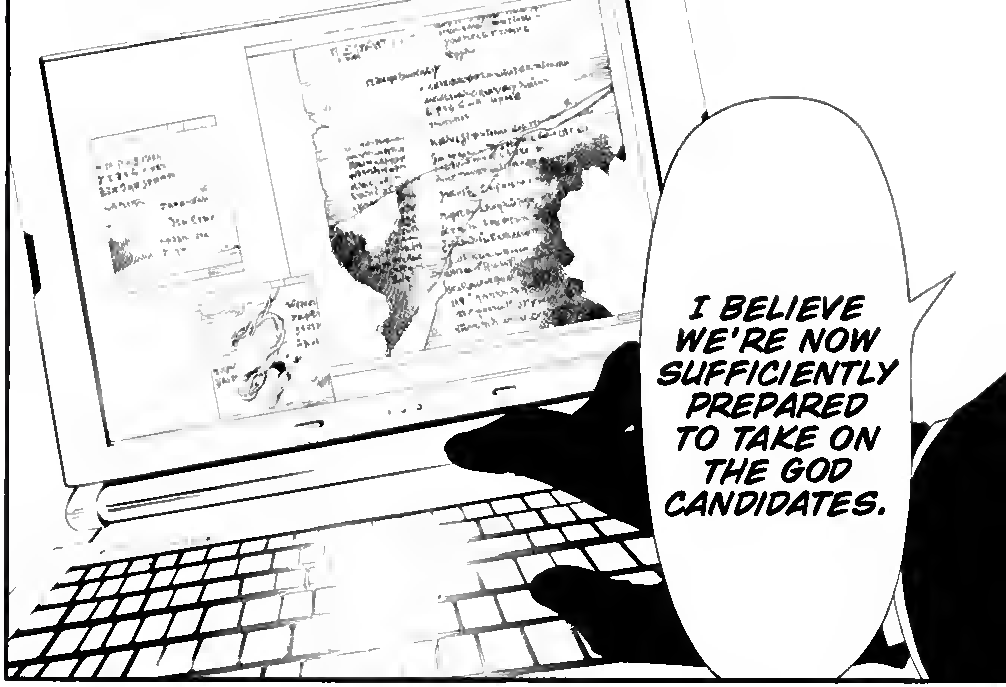
THAT I WANTED TO SEE YOU LAID OUT IN A BLOODY HEAP..
...JUUUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT YOU'D REACHED THE RELIC— WHERE I KNEW IT'D STING THE MOST. THE END.

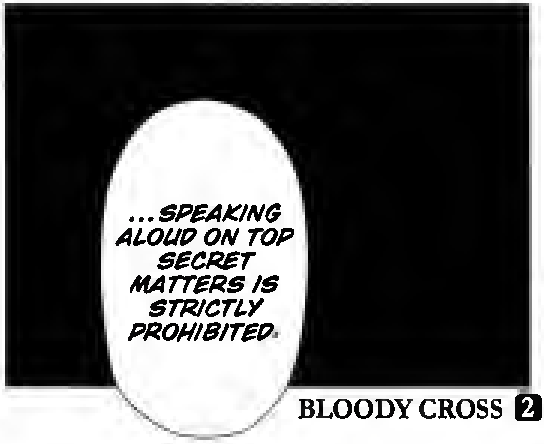
BUBU (CHUCKLE)

UNH.

DOKUN
DOKUN
...NOT MY WOUND...
...WHY... IS IT...
...IT'S BURNING LIKE IT'S ON FIRE...
DOKUN
DOKUN (BADUM)
...WHERE MY CURSE MARK USED TO BE...
DOKUN
...BUT THE SPOT...
DOKUN
DOKUN


PORI (KRNCH)
HA HA!
MOMOSE WINS!
FU (SLMP)
—...
RETRIEVE ALL OF THE DIVINE WEAPONS WE BROUGHT.
...WE WERE ABLE TO MAKE OUR MOVE.
HOWEVER... THANKS TO SENPAI'S TRAPPING BOTH GOD CANDIDATES TEMPORARILY...
THE TROOPS WITH SATSUKI WERE WIPED OUT, EH...?
A PAINFUL LOSS.


I BELIEVE WE'RE NOW SUFFICIENTLY PREPARED TO TAKE ON THE GOD CANDIDATES.


...SPEAKING ALOUD ON TOP SECRET MATTERS IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED.

OH... SORRY.
PLEASE FORGIVE ME...YOUR EXCELLENCY. I'D FORGOT-TEN...

BLOODY CROSS

WELL, THEN ...
...HOW SHALL WE PROCEED, HMM?
THE TWO PIECES OF THE SECOND RELIC HAVE APPEARED...
...TSUZUKI'S GONE AHEAD, HAS HE?
I'M GLAD.
WHO WILL CLAIM THEM— THE ANGEL OR THE FALLEN ONE...!!?
HA HA HA
HA HA!

To be Continued in BLOODY CROSS Vol. 3!!

BLOODY CROSS ❷

Shiwo Komeyama

Translation: Mari Morimoto • Lettering: Abigail Blackman

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First Yen Press ebook Edition: June 2014

ebook ISBN: 978-0-316-37984-7

App ISBN: 978-0-316-37987-8